NEW CLA MERC'S 500-MILE EV

FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK

AUTOCAR

EST. 1895 | AUTOCAR.CO.UK | 19 MARCH 2025

SKODA'S ULTIMATE ALL-ROUNDER

NEW OCTAVIA

New look, new tech, still the people's 3 Series

+ NEW ELROQ ROAD TEST

SKODA
AUTOCAR IMAGE

19 – 26 March 2025 £4.99
haymarket
12>
9 771355 829226

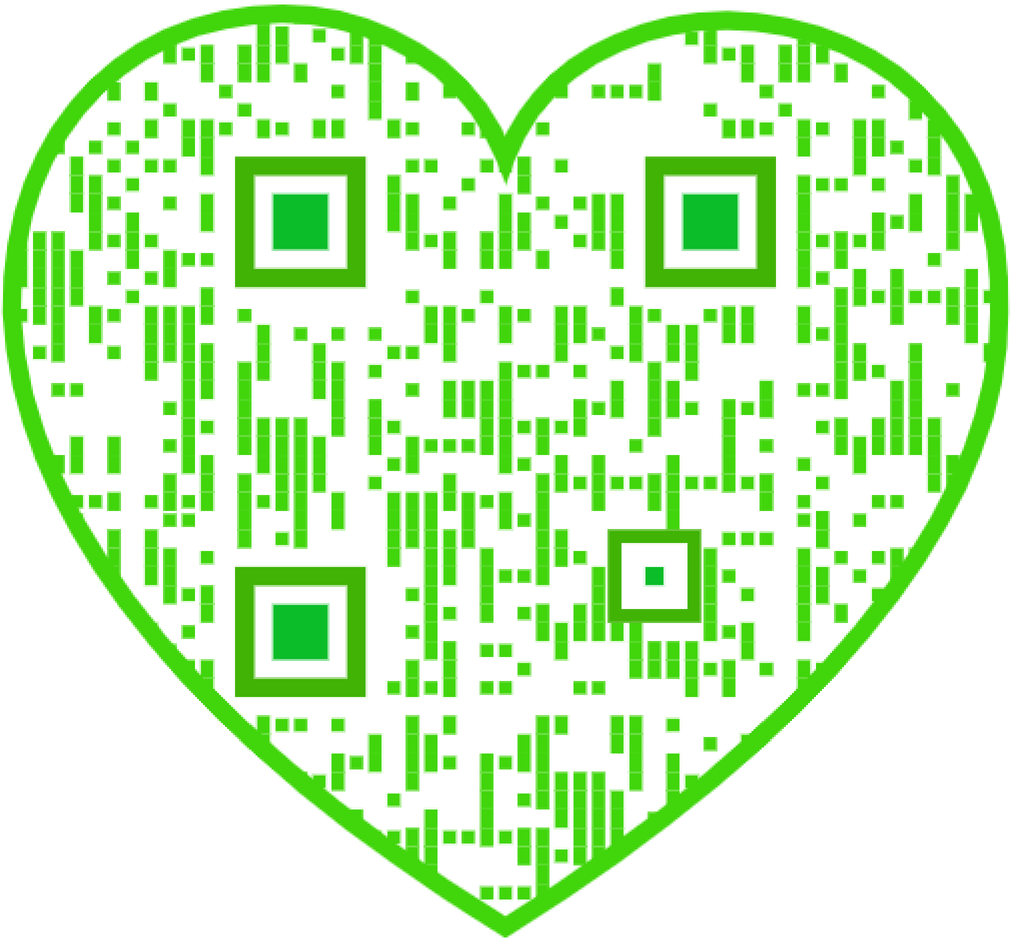
ALL-NEW ABARTH: QUICK AND QUIRKY

PRIOR'S CATERHAM vs JET FIGHTER

USED GUIDE: A TINY 4x4 FIAT FOR £1500

MEET THE MAN WHO *REALLY* LOVES ROUNDABOUTS

19 March 2025 | Skoda Elroq



GET YOUR WEEKLY FIX

13 issues for just £37.49

Rev up your week with a subscription to Autocar, the ultimate source of automotive joy.

As the world's leading car weekly, Autocar brings you closer to the action than ever before. Where do you turn for the latest industry news? Who delivers the most in-depth road tests? Who do you trust for expert advice on your next car purchase?

Autocar — the original car magazine, and still the best.

BRITAIN'S CHEAPEST EVs FACE OFF
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
AUTOCAR
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
JAG: WHAT'S NEXT
How they're really going to beat Bentley
4dr GT here this year
986bhp, 430-mile range
£100k S-Class rival
BMW iX: IT'S GREAT, BUT THAT GRILLE...
PORSCHE ROAD TEST
WHY NEW GTS IS THE 911 YOU WANT
'MOST EVs SUCK,' SAYS EV MAKER

AUTOCAR ARCHIVE

SAVE £27 on the shop price

AUTOCAR ARCHIVE See online for all subscription packages, which now include unlimited access to the Autocar Archive

Order today, by visiting
themagazineshop.com/2025PA/aca
or call 0344 848 8816 quoting '2025PA'

SCAN ME TO ORDER

TERMS AND CONDITIONS This is a UK-only offer. After your first 13 issues for £37.49, your subscription will renew at £37.49 every 13 issues. For overseas offers, please visit themagazineshop.com/2025PA/aca or call +44 (0) 1604 251 450. All savings are based on the UK cover price of £4.99 and are correct as of January 2025. Please allow up to 35 days for delivery of your first issue. Direct Debit rates are valid for one year, after which they are subject to change; should prices change, we will inform you in writing. Should you wish to cancel your subscription, it will be cancelled on expiry of the current term, which will not be refundable other than in exceptional circumstances. Details of the Direct Debit Guarantee are available on request. **Offer ends 31 May 2025**

COMMENT

SKODA'S RISE AND RISE HAS BEEN SIMPLY CLEVER

Skoda has been quietly changing perceptions for more than a decade, transforming itself from a mildly mocked budget brand to front and centre of the Volkswagen Group's strategy.

This week's financial results (p6) highlight its success: sales up 6.9% on last year to just shy of a million, some of the best profit margins in the industry and the fourth biggest-selling car brand in western Europe.

Being part of the VW Group plays a role, but it's achieving margins the group's other mainstream brands can't match, which shows just how strong the brand is. Skoda focuses on making cars people want in segments they want, and the quality of its models is paying off, based on sales and profit.

Its cars may still not have the cachet of a BMW or a Porsche, but they are highly commendable for their engineering too. The diesel Superb Estate is one of only three cars to have received five stars from us over the past year, and the subject of this week's road test, the Elroq EV (p28), isn't far off either…

With a major push into EVs ahead, it will be harder than ever to maintain its momentum, but Skoda has its ducks in a row to meet the challenge. And given where it has come from, few would doubt its ability to succeed. After all, is there anyone you know who is derisory about Skoda these days? Didn't think so.

Rachel Burgess, magazine editor
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online…

autocar.co.uk YouTube X TikTok

EV hot hatch mega-test
The age of the electric hot hatchback is finally dawning. So we pitch the hotly anticipated Alpine A290 against its key rivals.

The need for Swede
Volvo's technological flagship has arrived. Join Mark Tisshaw as he guides you round the ES90 – a £70k, 671bhp electric hatchaloon.

The best German cars ever
One of the world's most prolific car-making nations has an enviable and often brilliant back catalogue. These are its very finest cars.

Autocar (ISSN 1355-8293 USPS 25-185) is published weekly by Haymarket Media Group, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP, United Kingdom; haymarket.com; tel +44 (0)20 8267 5000

The US annual subscription price is $190.00. Airfreight and mailing in the US by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US postmaster: Send address changes to Autocar, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at the above address. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

Autocar magazine is also published in Estonia, Greece, India, Japan, Latvia, Korea and Thailand.

Autocar is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism. If you think we haven't met those standards and want to make a complaint, contact autocar@haymarket.com. For more information, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk

ipso. Regulated

Haymarket is certified by BSI to environmental standard ISO14001 and energy management standard ISO50001

Recycle

PEFC
PEFC/16-33-795
PEFC Certified
This product is from sustainably managed forests and controlled sources
www.pefc.co.uk

Autocar is a member of the organising committee of Car Of The Year caroftheyear.org

Issues with your mag?
For subscriber issues, call 0344 848 8816. If you can't find a news-stand copy of Autocar in your local area, email autocar@haymarket.com

22 ABARTH'S QUICK AND CHARACTERFUL EV

AUTOCAR
Issue 6663 | Volume 324 | No 2

NEWS

Skoda's landmark Octavia EV 4
Merc CLA EV gets 492-mile range 8
New 2.0 turbo for future GR Toyotas 11
VW ID Golf set for advanced tech 12
Renault 5 Turbo 3E packs 533bhp 14
MOT fraud clampdown criticised 16

FIRST DRIVES

Abarth 600e Scorpionissima 22
Vauxhall Mokka 1.2 and Electric 24
BMW X3 M50 26

ROAD TESTS

Skoda Elroq 85 Edition 28
Mercedes-Benz E450d Estate 34

FEATURES

£80k Caterham in Mach Valley 40
Why roundabouts are cool (really) 46
Volvo boss Jim Rowan speaks out 48
Lancia, a Lazarus of the car world 52

LONG-TERMERS

Renault Scenic 54
Cupra Tavascan 55
Tesla Model 3 56
Mazda MX-5 57
Mercedes-AMG CLE 53 58
Ineos Grenadier 59

COLUMNS

Mark Tisshaw 7
Jesse Crosse 15
Steve Cropley 17
Matt Prior 18
Damien Smith 19
Testing, testing 39
Why I love… 74

EVERY WEEK

How to subscribe 2
Your Views 20
Lost in the archive 65
Road test results 67

USED CARS

Fiat Panda buying guide 60
My car & I 62
Caught in the classifieds 63

40 HUNTING FIGHTER JETS IN A CSR SEVEN

52 LANCIA IS BACK: NEW YPSILON DRIVEN

NEWS

GOT A STORY Email our news editor
will.rimell@haymarket.com

OCTAVIA EV TO SPARK NEW ERA FOR SKODA

Electric estate will arrive by the end of the decade alongside hybrid hatch with all-new platform and fresh corporate look

AUTOCAR
IMAGE
SKODA
SKODA

Skoda will preview the Octavia's electric future with a new concept car at the Munich motor show in September.

The estate concept will trial a new design direction for Skoda and showcase a next-generation architecture that will be rolled out across the Volkswagen Group's future electric models.

Announcing the concept car at a media briefing for Skoda's 2024 financial results (see p6), CEO Klaus Zellmer said: "In September in Munich, we're going to have a concept car that gives an indication of what the new design language will be for the Octavia and what the technology in that car will be able to deliver."

Skoda had originally planned to launch an electric estate version of the Octavia based on the Volkswagen Group's current MEB electric architecture. However, Zellmer said it will instead be underpinned by the upcoming SSP architecture because it will offer "more performance and be more cost-efficient".

He added: "Wait and see until September and then we will show you the full potential and technical package that we envision. It will be a concept car so this is also a test bed for us to see what the resonance from the media, from our dealers and from our potential customers is."

The production version of the electric Octavia estate is due by the end of the decade at a similar time to the related Volkswagen Golf EV, which will also be based on the SSP platform. The electric Octavia estate is expected to lead the next generation of electric Skodas and mark the point where its combustion-engine and all-electric ranges start to converge.

To date, Skoda's EVs have existed in a parallel line-up as the brand prioritises consumer choice and will continue to do so. That the electric Octavia will be an estate suggests the hatchback model ▶

"The new SSP architecture will offer more performance and be more cost-efficient"

Epiq will make its debut in 2026 as an entry-level EV twinned with the ID 2

◂ will continue as a hybridised combustion car, as Skoda gradually introduces battery-electric versions of its more familiar nameplates.

Before the electric Octavia, two more Skoda EVs are due. The Epiq, a sibling to the Volkswagen ID 2 and Cupra Raval, will arrive next year as Skoda's entry-level electric car.

The brand will also put its Vision 7S concept car into production in 2026 as a range-topping seven-seater on the electric side of its range. Zellmer said this model will be an electric equivalent of the Kodiaq.

It is likely to be Skoda's most expensive car yet, but Zellmer said it will retain the brand's core principles of "design functionality and value for money".

However, there are no plans to launch a Skoda version of the recently unveiled Volkswagen ID Every1 concept car, which is due in production form in 2027 as an entry-level electric city car priced from around £17,000.

"We have decided not to be part of that segment," said Zellmer. "Within the Volkswagen Group, VW [will be left to] conquer that part of the market."

Skoda is not abandoning entry-level cars altogether, though. Zellmer confirmed a sub-£17,000 starting price will remain in its range as the Fabia, Kamiq and Scala have all been signed off for updates to keep them in the market for the years ahead. This will include mild-hybrid versions – something that is required for the upcoming Euro 7 emissions regulations, which re-engineered versions of these cars will have to meet.

Zellmer is keen to add more hybrids to Skoda's

SKODA NOW THE WEST'S MOST PROFITABLE VOLUME CAR MAKER AFTER A RECORD YEAR

Skoda now claims to have the best profit margins on vehicle sales of any Western volume car maker following a record year for sales revenues and profits.

In 2024, Skoda's 926,600 new car sales (a 6.9% year-on-year rise) generated €27.8 billion (£23.4bn) in revenue and an operating profit of €2.3bn (£1.9bn).

Skoda CEO Klaus Zellmer said: "It gives us a strong, fundamental confirmation of our business model being resilient in such challenging times and, of course, strong confidence to also keep the success on track."

Skoda is now Europe's fourth-largest car maker, rising three places from 2023. The UK, France, Italy and Spain all had record years for Skoda sales in 2024. The Octavia remains the brand's best-selling car.

Zellmer said the improved profitability is the result of not only an increase in sales and "a very favourable product mix" but also the successful implementation of its 'Next Level Efficiency+' programme, designed to keep all powertrain options open to customers while still reducing its CO_2 emissions.

For the foreseeable future, Skoda will continue to offer parallel ranges of electric cars and combustion-engined models while striving for price parity – even if that means a dent in profit margins.

What's more, Zellmer said reducing CO_2 emissions is a "responsibility" and not just a legislative requirement. As such, there will also be no slowdown in the rollout of electric vehicles "but we cannot overrule consumer sentiment", said Zellmer.

On that point, Skoda will continue to invest in its combustion-engined models, including improvements to the Fabia, Scala and Kamiq to keep them in production for longer and meet updated emissions regulations.

OFFICIAL PICTURE

Skoda is going after the Kia EV9 with an electric seven-seater to sit alongside the Kodiaq. Due on sale next year, it should tout more than 400 miles of range and up to 335bhp.

Hybrid Octavias will be sold alongside the electric version

line-up, including more long-range PHEVs on the back of the success of the Superb and Kodiaq hybrids.

“We want to have more hybrids in our portfolio because this is clearly something that we see reflected in the competitive landscape and consumer sentiment,” he said. “The feedback we get from our dealers and from our customers in those cars [Superb and Kodiaq PHEVs] is very reassuring that we’re heading the right way to have the best of both worlds: the range and the ease of a combustion engine, and the peace and quiet driving around and more than 100km [62 miles of electric range] with the E drive mode.”

The vRS badge will also continue in the electric era. Zellmer said: “This is something that is our DNA. We will keep it and you can’t neglect that. You cannot get rid of that.”

He confirmed a second electric Skoda vRS (after the Enyaq vRS) is in the works. It is understood to be a vRS version of the Epiq as a sibling to the VW ID 2 GTI.

MARK TISSHAW

“Skoda is keen to add more hybrids to its line-up, including long-range PHEVs”

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

CEO Zellmer says Skoda “cannot overrule customer sentiment”

WHEN WAS THE last time you heard a Skoda described as a Volkswagen with a different badge? If that’s ancient history, the notion of Skoda making cheap cars from eastern Europe is downright prehistoric.

Skoda is now Europe’s fourth-largest car brand and, according to its 2024 financial results, has the best profit margins among Western volume car makers. It also has the brand image to match.

CEO Klaus Zellmer, long tipped for roles even higher up the Volkswagen Group food chain, seemingly has an answer for everything, perhaps most notably price parity between similar ICE and EV models. (Skoda is the “first car manufacturer of big relevance” to do so; who’s that a reference to?)

As Skoda CEO, he oversees the development of ICEs for the VW Group and doesn’t have a self-imposed deadline on their end of sale. His focus is on reducing CO_2 emissions, whatever the power source, on both new cars sold and those already on the road.

“We need to make sure we have the gates open for development of alternative fuels, e-fuels, biofuels, whatever makes sense to cut down CO_2 emissions for the vast majority of cars in the car parc,” he says.

Skoda is continuing to balance a range that offers a variety of fuel types, including diesels. Zellmer says to do the opposite would be to “overrule customer sentiment”, which Skoda “cannot do”.

“We can build, develop, produce and sell anything we want. Consumers will decide. Our clear strategy is to put customers first,” he says. “We’re doing that successfully, even though it’s a lot of investment and it’s a lot of complexity. The 2024 figures show that we can handle it successfully.”

From finance chief Holger Peters’ perspective, Skoda’s success is built on not only appealing products and branding, but also a low break-even point from being based in the Czech Republic “with continuous efficiency and cost programmes” and the relationships it has with partners, including dealers, unions and importers.

That focus on costs has enabled Skoda to go from being a cheap car maker to one that’s about value, allowing for larger models and higher prices. Kia is at a similar stage, Dacia the next cab off the rank. But Zellmer has no desire to change a winning formula.

“Skoda is still very much associated with very good value for money when you look at buying motives,” he says. “But that doesn’t mean we always have to be the cheapest. You’re going to see that with the Epiq next year and with the seven-seater [a range-topping electric SUV for 2026]. This will provide an incredible package in terms of design functionality, but also value for money.

“We can sell anything we want. Consumers will decide”

“We’re sticking to that principle. This is what sets us apart from competition, internally and externally, and we get confirmation of that still being something that we deliver.”

OFFICIAL PICTURES
CLA
CLA

NEW MERCEDES CLA IS LONGEST-RANGE, MOST EFFICIENT EV

New motor, new battery and advanced aero bring 492 miles, 5mpkWh

The new Mercedes-Benz CLA has been revealed as the UK's longest-range and most efficient electric car.

Arriving later this year, the entry-level CLA 250+ with EQ Technology will be capable of driving up to 492 miles between charges, claims Mercedes, and will still manage 431 miles if driven exclusively at motorway speeds.

Although pending homologation, these figures should mean the CLA EV leapfrogs all other electric cars available in the UK. That includes Mercedes' own flagship EQS 450+, which manages 481 miles per charge from a 118kWh battery. That car is priced at £112,610, however – some £70,000 more than the CLA EV's expected starting price.

That remarkable range is the result of Mercedes' efforts to minimise the CLA EV's energy consumption: it has a nickel-manganese-cobalt battery with a capacity of 85kWh.

This means the CLA EV achieves an efficiency figure above 5.0mpkWh – which many manufacturers consider the key to taking EVs to the next level.

PUNCHY YET ALSO FRUGAL

The CLA EV's impressive range figure is in no small part thanks to its aerodynamic design. Although the car is larger than its predecessor in every dimension – 25mm wider (at 1855mm), 25mm taller (at 1468mm) and 30mm longer (at 4723mm) – lots of work went into minimising its frontal area, and smoothing the flow of air around it.

For example, the wheels are set further in-board of the arches than previously. Small inlets on the front bumper (and corresponding outlets at the rear) guide the flow of air around each corner, relatively undisturbed by the alloy wheels' flush-faced designs.

The efforts net a slippery drag coefficient of 0.21, just behind that of the EQS (0.20) and ahead that of the Tesla Model 3 (0.22).

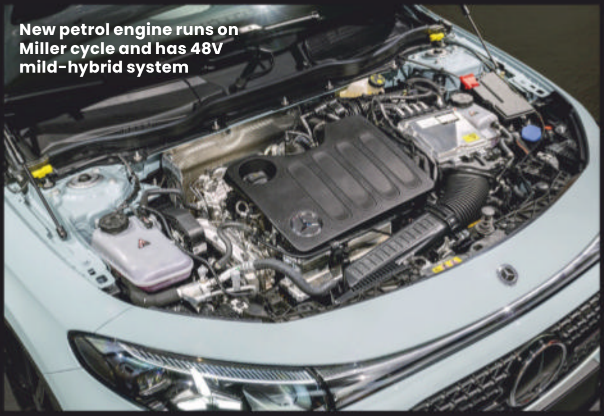
The CLA EV's new rear-mounted permanent magnet motor is also significant to its efficiency. It uses a new silicon-carbide inverter that brings greater output in a smaller package, reducing weight, while the engineers claim its torque density is boosted by the magnets being inserted in a double-V formation, concentrating their field.

The motor also gets a Porsche Taycan-style two-speed gearbox, rather than the usual single-speed reduction gearing. This has a short (11:1) first ratio for improved off-the-mark acceleration and better efficiency at town speeds and a significantly longer (5:1) second ratio for less consumption at a cruise.

The powertrain puts out 268bhp, which allows the CLA 250+ to complete the 0-62mph dash in 6.7sec.

The four-wheel-drive CLA 350 4Matic with EQ Technology gets an additional 107bhp motor with a single-speed gearbox on its front axle, giving a combined output of 349bhp. This cuts its 0-62mph sprint time to 4.9sec, making it nearly as quick as the Volkswagen Golf R hot hatch.

This additional motor is decoupled from the front axle when it isn't needed, reducing energy losses to


New petrol engine runs on Miller cycle and has 48V mild-hybrid system

Charging cables and more can be stowed in the EV's 101-litre frunk

"There's also a hybrid, which promises diesel levels of fuel efficiency"

New "avant-garde" interior design "follows the principle of reduction to the essentials"

Windscreen blends into glass roof, filling interior with light

friction by 90%. This means the four-wheel-drive CLA EV can still manage 478 miles per charge – a smaller disparity compared with the rear-driven version than is typical of most other EVs.

Braking primarily relies on the motors' regenerative effect (which can provide up to 200kW of stopping power), helping to keep the battery topped up.

The CLA EV can be rapid-charged at rates of up to 320kW, thanks to its 800V electrical architecture, allowing for a 186-mile top-up in just 10 minutes.

In addition to the 85kWh battery, a 58kWh lithium-iron-phosphate pack will be added to the line-up shortly after launch. That model will be significantly cheaper but also offer a reduced range of around 300 miles.

ADVANCES IN COMBUSTION TOO

The new CLA will also be offered in hybrid form. Specifically designed to fit in the same space as the EV's front motor, its powertrain pairs a new 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine with a small, 1.3kWh battery and a 27bhp electric motor. These combine to send either 134bhp or 161bhp through the front wheels or, in the range-topping 4Matic model, 188bhp to all four wheels.

According to Mercedes, the engine achieves "diesel levels of fuel efficiency", suggesting an MPG figure comfortably above 50.

As part of a push for parity from Mercedes, the hybrid CLA will be priced on a par with the CLA EV, Mercedes CEO Ola Källenius recently announced. This is thanks to cost savings of some 30% in battery production bringing the EV's overall price down by around 15%.

To that end, pricing is expected to start in the low- to mid-£40,000 range. The EV will go on sale first, in around October, with the hybrid following a few months later.

Joining the saloon will be a new CLA Shooting Brake. This estate car is earmarked to arrive in the UK early next year with both powertrain options, and is likely to be unwrapped at September's Munich motor show.

STAR POWER

In a first for Mercedes, the CLA hybrid and CLA EV will look almost identical inside and out, as well as sharing a model name. This marks an end to Mercedes' strategy of entirely bespoke EVs being developed to sit alongside their combustion-engined equivalents, such as with the E-Class and EQE.

The CLA also ushers in a dramatic new look for future Mercedes models, emphasising the brand's three-pointed star logo.

The motif features in the CLA's headlights and rear brake lights. The EV also gets a flush front grille with 142 backlit stars. They surround the main front badge, which is backlit too. ▸

CLA is taller, longer and wider than before; wheelbase has grown 61mm; drag is 0.21

> “A 186-mile top-up takes as little as 10 minutes”

Merc’s star motif appears hundreds of times on the EV

The main badge is also lit in the US but not in the EU, due to legal restrictions.

The CLA hybrid is differentiated by a traditional open grille, needed to provide cooling airflow to the engine.

NEW-LOOK INTERIOR

Inside, the new CLA takes on a sportier character than its more luxurious stablemates. The front seats have chunky side bolsters, for example, and there are more exuberant material choices, such as a combination of black and white Alcantara and faux leather with red stitching.

The dashboard is designed around the latest iteration of Mercedes’ Superscreen, whose three digital displays (a 10.25in one for the instruments in front of the driver; a 14.6in infotainment one centrally; and, optionally, a 14in one for the front passenger) span its entire width.

Thanks to Mercedes’ latest MB.OS operating system, the screens can be used to play video games such as Fortnite while on the move or stream shows and films via Netflix and other such services.

The system also features the latest iteration of Mercedes’ virtual assistant, which blends various artificial intelligence functions (ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft Bing) to provide more accurate answers to questions.

In cars without the Superscreen, the passenger screen will be replaced with a glass panel with LED-backlit star logos, which match the interior’s ambient lighting.

Boot space is rated at 405 litres, which is 55 litres down on the old CLA’s but, in a first for a modern Mercedes, the EV gets a frunk that adds another 101 litres of storage space.

CHARLIE MARTIN

NEW CLA SHOOTING BRAKE WILL BE ONE OF A KIND

The new CLA Shooting Brake is undergoing advanced testing ahead of its debut in the coming months.

The third generation of Mercedes’ smallest estate model will be identical to the CLA saloon ahead of the C-pillar, with a more capacious, hatchback boot boosting its appeal to family buyers.

It will be unique in its positioning as a premium compact estate in the UK, its closest obvious rival, the Genesis G70 Shooting Brake, having been taken off sale here last year.

BMW and Audi have yet to confirm plans for electric alternatives to the 3 Series Touring and A4 Avant.

SPY SHOTS

THE LONGEST-RANGE ELECTRIC CARS IN THE UK

Mercedes-Benz CLA
492 miles

Mercedes-Benz EQS
481 miles

Audi A6 E-tron
463 miles

Polestar 3
438 miles

Volkswagen ID 7
436 miles

TOYOTA PAVES WAY FOR NEXT-GEN ICE-POWERED GR YARIS

New 2.0-litre hybrid engine is being developed for future sporty cars

Toyota is priming a new hybrid powertrain for its GR models, giving the Japanese company's sporting sub-brand a new lease of life in an era of strict emissions regulations.

This set-up will be based on a new turbocharged four-cylinder engine that is currently in development.

For the next generation of sporty Toyotas, a 2.0-litre variant will be used.

This is currently being piloted in the mid-engined GR Yaris M Concept, with engineers stress-testing the prototype engine "to failure".

The new unit can support both mild-hybrid and plug-in hybrid set-ups and features a shorter piston stroke than Toyota's current engines, making it smaller and lighter.

This is important, suggested Hiroyuki Yamada, a GR engineer working on the project, because it means a hybrid element can be fitted with minimal weight penalty.

He said: "We can use hybrid for future cars [which use this engine]. We will use it in our motorsport activities in the future because of emissions.

"This technology we create we will apply to both motorsport and passenger [car] engines. In future, we want a more fuel-efficient engine [for GR cars]."

Toyota has yet to disclose the engine's technical details, but reports suggest outputs of around 400bhp will be feasible in road cars.

The possibility of a second-generation combustion GR Yaris will be welcomed by enthusiasts in Europe, given that the current hot hatch (which uses a turbocharged 1.6-litre three-cylinder engine making 276bhp) has been sold in limited numbers due to stringent emissions laws.

Toyota UK boss Scott Thompson told Autocar the GR line "is extremely important" to the UK market as "people aspire to [own] those types of vehicles".

He added: "What the GR has done from a halo point of view, looking into our brand, has been amazing in terms of the Yaris."

Thompson hinted that hybridisation could result in more allocation for the UK.

"A shorter stroke makes it smaller and lighter"

He views the addition of motorsport-derived trickle-down technology as "critical in terms of how we operate and support our brand".

The idea of giving GR cars hybrid power has been long mooted by Toyota. In 2023, chief technology officer Hiroki Nakajima told Autocar: "Hybrid systems are always a good solution for environmental cars, not just for passenger cars but for sporty cars as well."

The mid-engined set-up being tested by the GR Yaris M Concept is also being considered for production use, putting the new 2.0-litre turbo four behind the rear seats.

However, development is ongoing, said Yamada. For example, the four-wheel-drive concept has a tendency to lose control when the weight shifts in long corners. "This is something we still need to develop," he said.

The GR Yaris M Concept might also have been created to serve as a test bed for the long-mooted revival of the MR2. The mid-engined sports car was reportedly approved for production in May last year.

WILL RIMELL

YARIS EV COMING – BUT NOT ANY TIME SOON

An electric successor to the Yaris is in Toyota's plans – but now is "not the right moment" for it.

The supermini is the company's best-seller in the UK and second best-seller in Europe. Some 22,000 examples were sold here last year, representing around 21% of Toyota's total UK sales.

When asked about an electric Yaris being introduced, Toyota Europe product and marketing boss Andrea Carlucci told Autocar: "This is the idea, but now it is not something we talk about."

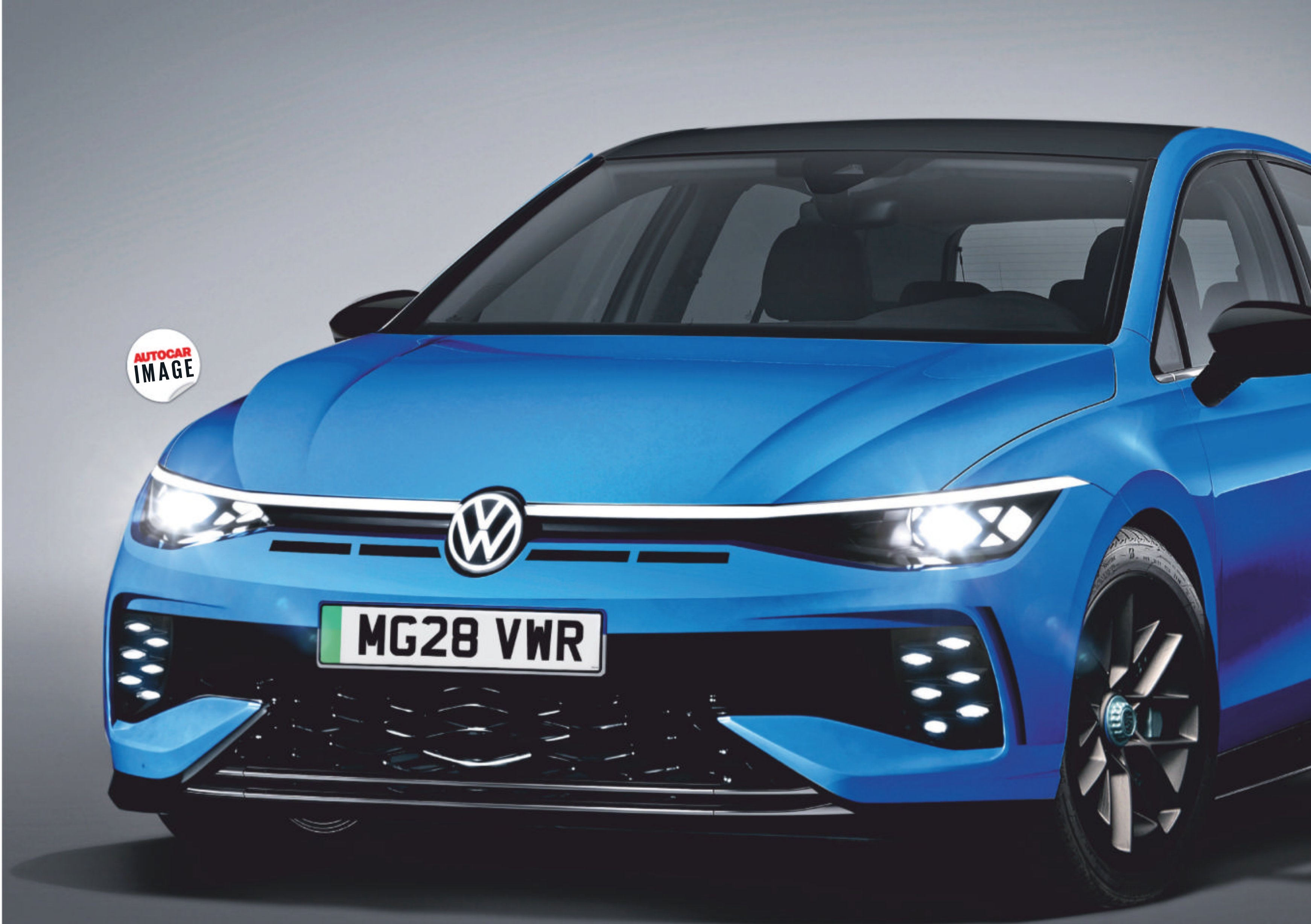
He added: "We have deliberately decided to start [our EV sales] in the fastest-growing segments [C, D, E]. The right moment will arrive, but this is not quite now."

Toyota UK boss Scott Thompson acknowledged that the enthusiastic reception for the new Renault 5 has shown there is an appetite for such a car in the UK.

"There will come a time and a place," he said. "For us, it is all about the right car, the right place at the right time. And at the moment, the expansion you're seeing [is in] the right segments for Europe for us right now."

The Yaris EV is likely to arrive towards the end of this decade, given that the three new EVs Toyota will launch by the end of 2026 will be a pick-up, a fastback and an SUV.

Current GR Yaris has been very well received but is in short supply



NEXT VW GOLF TO TAP ULTRA-ADVANCED TECH

Hatch EV will be a software-defined car, courtesy of Rivian partnership

The new Volkswagen ID Golf, due in around 2028, will be one of the first Volkswagen Group models to benefit from the full potential of an advanced new software system being developed in a joint venture with EV start-up Rivian.

The new model will be the ninth generation of the Golf but the first to be fully electric, and it will sit on the Volkswagen Group's advanced new SSP EV platform. The ID Golf will be twinned with the new Skoda Octavia (p4).

Last year, the Volkswagen Group invested £4.6 billion in Rivian to form a new joint venture to develop an advanced new 'zonal' software architecture, which is set to be used on virtually all the group's vehicles sold in Europe and North America from 2027 onwards. The focus on software is one element of a new 10-year plan to make the Volkswagen Group what CEO Oliver Blume calls "the leading global automotive tech driver".

The £17,000 production version of the ID Every1 concept will be the first car to use a version of the new platform (News, 12 March).

Volkswagen tech chief Kai Grünitz told Autocar that launching the platform with the city car means it can serve as "the front-runner for the ID Golf". He added: "This reduces the risk for the

OFFICIAL PICTURE

Next-gen software will be used first on production version of ID Every1

“I can offer new functions to customers even after they’ve bought their car”

CEO Blume: “Software is key to thrilling our customers”

Golf, because we will start with lower functionality in the ID Every1 than will be necessary for the ID Golf.”

WHY RIVIAN SOFTWARE IS KEY

The Rivian architecture will make all future Volkswagen Group models software-defined vehicles, with software controlling all the key functions. The zonal architecture consolidates the myriad of separate electronic control units needed for individual functions in standard cars with a handful of system-on-chip ECUs.

Grünitz said the system is flexible, so different Volkswagen Group cars can feature differing numbers of zonal ECUs, depending on needs. He added: “I can offer new functions to customers even after they have bought their car without touching them. This is really the next step.”

The Volkswagen Group is also working with Xpeng to develop a separate China Electric Architecture. This will place greater focus on driver assistance and interior tech and it will be used for all future models in China. The move reflects the different supply chains, technology and customer needs in that market.

Blume said “software is key to thrilling our customers” in future and the emphasis on the new platforms will allow the company to “harness the opportunities offered by a new era”.

IN-HOUSE UNIFIED BATTERY CELLS

The ID Golf is also set to be one of the first Volkswagen Group models to use the firm’s new unified battery cells, which have a more efficient cell-to-pack design and will be used for around 80% of the group’s future models. They can be fitted with a range of different chemistries for different models.

The new cells will be made by Volkswagen’s PowerCo battery firm, and Blume has cited the importance of the battery to EV performance as the key reason to bring production in-house.

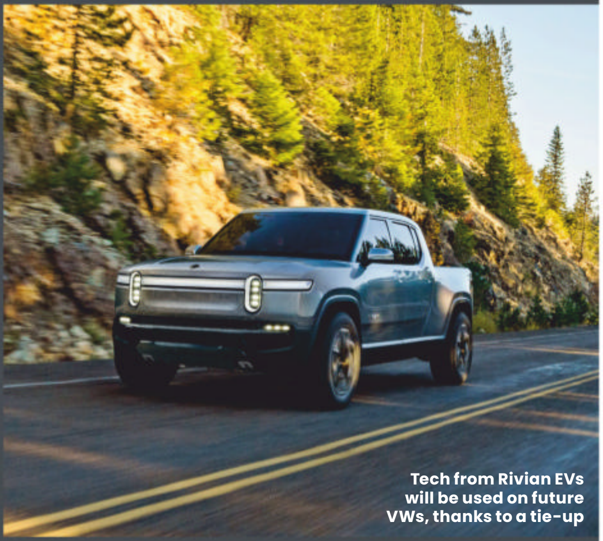
SCALE IS VITAL TO FUTURE PLANS

Blume said the Volkswagen Group will maintain a multi-powertrain approach for the foreseeable future, continuing to develop combustion and hybrid set-ups alongside EVs.

He said that although the group “was recently criticised” for its broad powertrain mix and large scale, it will serve as “our competitive advantage” in the future. But while the group will take advantage of its global scale, there will be more focus on tailoring products to individual regions, such as more touchscreen-heavy cars in China and the launch of the Scout brand in the US to develop a line of rugged EVs.

The Volkswagen Group posted increased revenues of around £274 billion last year, although a rise in costs means its post-tax earnings of £10.3bn were down 30.6%.

The firm is currently undergoing a series of cost-cutting measures, including shedding around 35,000 jobs at Volkswagen plants in Germany as part of a range of production moves. These include production of the ICE Golf, which will continue to be sold alongside its electric successor, moving to Puebla in Mexico. The model has been produced in Wolfsburg since its launch in 1974.
JAMES ATTWOOD



Tech from Rivian EVs will be used on future VWs, thanks to a tie-up

ICE Macan is being phased out; new SUV could fill that gap

PORSCHE EYES ALL-NEW ICE SUV

PORSCHE IS EVALUATING the addition of a new combustion-engined SUV to its line-up before the end of this decade.

Company CEO Oliver Blume has confirmed that planning is under way on a new model line that would be offered with pure-combustion and hybrid powertrains.

The new SUV could serve as an effective replacement for the ICE Macan, which is being phased out to coincide with the launch of the new electric Macan.

Autocar has previously reported that Porsche has considered launching a new ICE Macan. Blume says the new SUV would be “clearly different” from the Macan but wouldn’t give any details on size or positioning.

However, he said it would be “a Porsche-typical SUV that will have synergies with other models” and “the first concepts are currently being developed and they have been very well received”.

Porsche has also been working on an all-new seven-seat SUV, codenamed K1, to sit above the Cayenne. While the K1 was due to be electric-only, it’s possible that Porsche could add a combustion version.

LAMBO EV: 2000BHP TIPPED

Lamborghini’s first electric car could pack up to 2000bhp and use ultra-fast 980V electricals. Based on the recent Lanzador concept, the 2+2 GT is due by the end of the decade on a platform developed for VW Group performance brands. Group boss Oliver Blume said the platform’s ability to take up to 2000bhp was “a very specific set-up for Lamborghini”.

RENAULT 5 TURBO 3E TO BE 533BHP ‘MINI-SUPERCAR’

Two in-wheel motors will give limited-run EV ferocious pace and agility

The radical Renault 5 Turbo 3E hatchback will arrive in 2027 as the brand’s most powerful and advanced road car to date, packed with 533bhp and supercar-baiting acceleration.

Indeed, this electric reincarnation of the 5 Turbo of 1980 – also the number of examples that will be made – is said by Renault to have created an entirely new segment: the “mini-supercar”.

It is loosely based on today’s retro-styled Renault 5 electric supermini but has a bespoke platform, its own bodywork and a pair of in-wheel motors.

These combine to produce a claimed 3540lb ft of wheel torque, although the torque transferred to the road is likely to be closer to 10% of that figure.

The resulting performance is a 0-62mph time that is expected to be less than 3.5sec and a track-only top speed of 168mph.

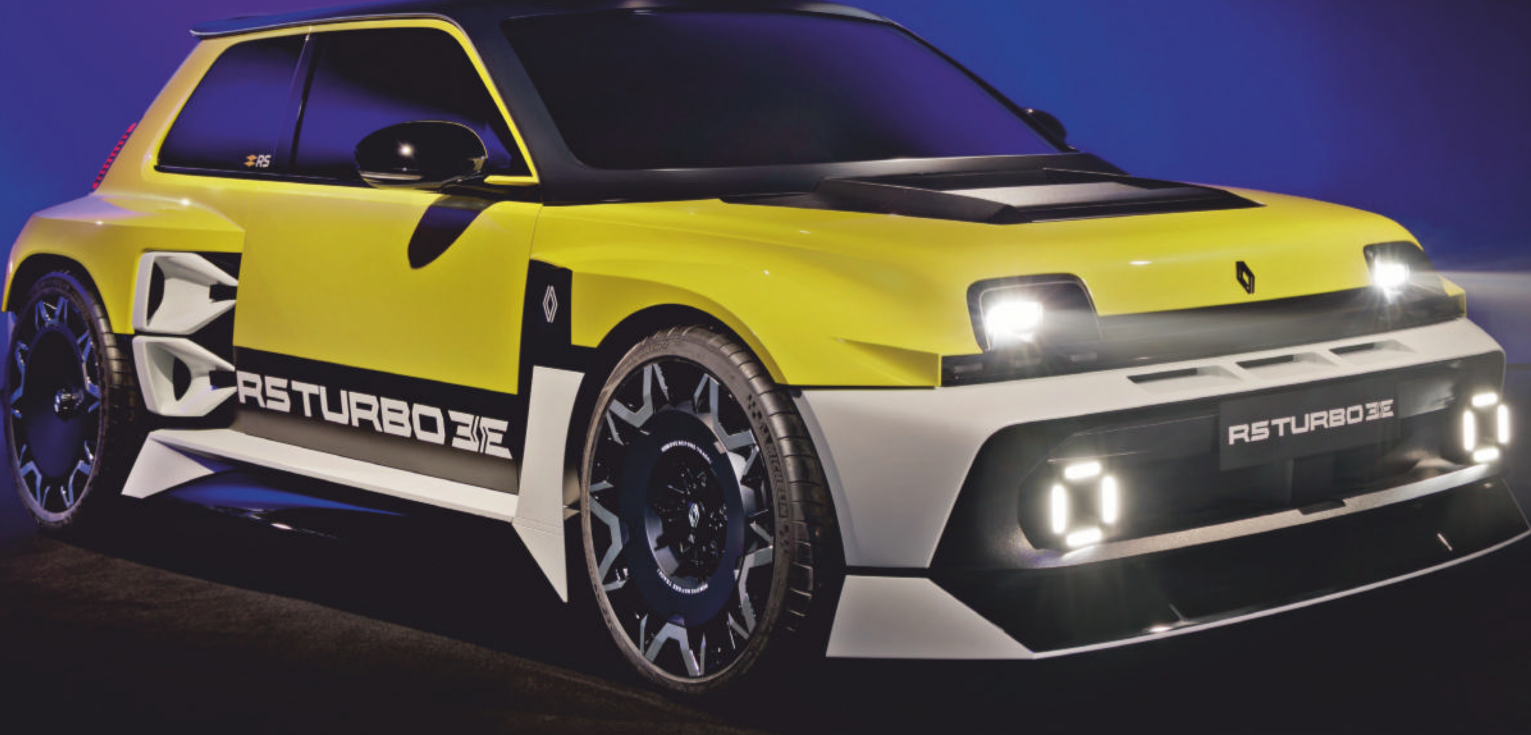
The in-wheel motors are said to deliver their power to the rear wheels with greater immediacy than conventional ones. They also enable more precise control of each wheel and provide a “significant” weight and space saving at the axle.

The motors draw their power from a 70kWh battery pack that is fitted in a way that optimises agility and offers “spectacular” drift capabilities, according to Renault. The car even has a dedicated drift mode and a rally-style vertical handbrake.

> **“0-62mph is expected to take less than 3.5sec”**

The battery pack is good for a range of 250 miles, claims Renault.

Because of the car’s race track credentials, the thermal management of the battery enables it to be driven at speeds of up to 168mph before being fast-



OFFICIAL PICTURES

NEW iX3 AND 3 SERIES EV TURN UP THE HEAT

THE NEXT ERA of BMW is edging closer as the firm enters late-stage testing of its first Neue Klasse electric cars.

Both the iX3 SUV and electric 3 Series saloon have been photographed hot-weather testing in South Africa.

The first to break cover will be the iX3. BMW has yet to give a date, but the firm has staged a number of important reveals at its home motor show in Munich in recent years so the September event seems a likely venue.

Previewed in 2023 by the Vision Neue Klasse X concept, the second-gen iX3 will ride on BMW’s new Gen6 platform.

The iX3 will be closely followed by the electric 3 Series, itself previewed by the Vision Neue Klasse concept. Due in late 2026, it’s expected to revive the dormant i3 moniker.

UK FIRM LAUNCHES 895KG ELECTRIC SPORTS CAR

A NEW BRITISH company has revealed a sub-tonne electric sports car that it aims to put on sale next year for the same price as a mid-rung Alpine A110.

The first model from EV start-up Longbow is a compact, two-seat rival to the likes of Caterham’s upcoming Project V coupé and the promised electric A110.

Available as the open-roof Speedster and the Roadster coupé, the Longbow is said to weigh less than 995kg - lighter than even the Mazda MX-5.

Roadster is a 995kg coupé priced at £64,995

charged at 350kW, enabling it to charge from 15% to 80% in 15 minutes.

Renault CEO Fabrice Cambolive said: "For me, it was very important to be able to have as extensive as possible coverage in terms of customer needs for the 5 - beginning with a very interesting price bracket but opening the adoption of this car to people who want extreme sensations.

"When you have such a car which is such fun to drive, why not push the boundaries?"

The all-aluminium platform was developed by Alpine, Renault's sporting sibling brand, and has been designed to avoid compromises to performance, lightness, agility and efficiency, according to its maker. It aims to be "in line with supercar standards".

The platform sits under a bespoke body made from lightweight materials. Its carbon-composite structure enables the car to have a kerb weight of about 1450kg, which is just 1kg more than the regular 5, despite its larger battery pack, extra performance and additional motor.

It has been designed to look like a supercar while referencing the original 5 Turbo and Turbo 2 and has an aero-optimised body.

Compared with the regular 5, the windscreen has been moved back and the wheelbase extended to help it achieve "the length of a city car for the width of a supercar".

Inside are a pair of bucket seats, six-point harnesses, a raft of weight-reducing carbon elements and the same 10.1in gauge display and 10.25in touchscreen as in the regular 5.

Cambolive previously suggested to Autocar that there could be more performance models in the pipeline for Renault after.

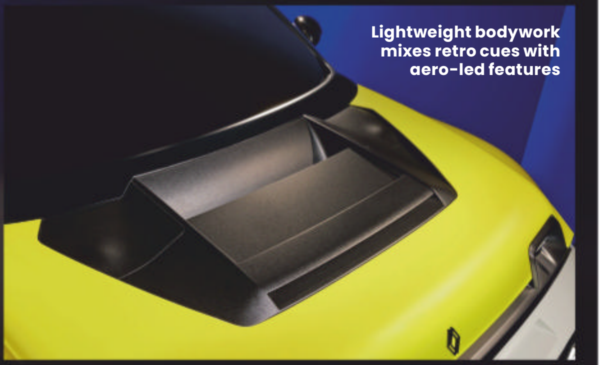
"I prefer to speak about the Turbo 3E, and after that to see what we can do on top of that if the Turbo 3E is a success," he said. "Let's build our 'sportivity' step by step."

Pricing is unconfirmed, but it will be below the £209k of Alpine's similarly extreme A110 R Ultime track car. Deliveries will begin in the first half of 2027.

JONATHAN BRYCE

It sits on a bespoke chassis that's wider and longer than regular 5's

Digital dials employ '80s stylistic vibe and sit in familiar 10.1in display


Lightweight bodywork mixes retro cues with aero-led features

Longbow was founded in 2023 with an ambition of "establishing an all-new vehicle category: the "featherweight electric vehicle".

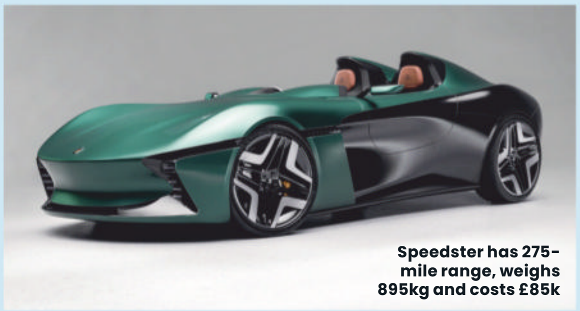
To that end, the Speedster and Roadster have been developed on a bespoke aluminium platform. Precise technical details remain undisclosed but Longbow promises a 0-62mph time of 3.5sec for the open-roof car, which it said will tip the scales at just 895kg.

That's an especially remarkable figure in the context of its claimed 275-mile range, although Longbow has not yet confirmed battery chemistries or capacities.

The Speedster is available to order now from £84,995 ahead of production starting next year. Only 150 examples are set to be built.

The 995kg, £64,995 Roadster will enter production when all the Speedsters are built.

Longbow has not yet confirmed a factory location but has said its cars will be engineered and hand-built in the UK.


Speedster has 275-mile range, weighs 895kg and costs £85k

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE

Pioneer 25 FCEV will be used in the new FIA Extreme H World Cup

HYDROGEN FUEL CELL TECH TAKEN TO A NEW EXTREME

THE HYDROGEN FUEL cell could be one of the most highly developed and rigorously tested automotive technologies never to reach mainstream production, but that doesn't mean it won't. The FIA Extreme H World Cup, a new off-road motorsport championship due to kick off later this year, aims to demonstrate just how capable the technology is.

Not only will its Pioneer 25 cars be powered by hydrogen fuel cells consuming sustainably produced hydrogen but the electricity powering on-site activities at the events will be generated using stationary fuel cells too.

The cars are based on Extreme E electric off-road racers, using the same kind of electric drivetrain but with the batteries partially replaced by a 75kW hydrogen fuel cell system. The stack is fuelled by 2kg of compressed hydrogen gas stored at 700 bar in two Toyota Mirai tanks.

Fuel cells are best suited to providing a steady stream of power rather than the transient bursts motors need, so there's a 325kW, 36kWh battery in between the two, acting as a buffer. Operating at 450V-850V, the battery powers two 268bhp motors driving front and rear axles and making 536bhp in total. Top speed is 124mph and 0-62mph takes 4.5sec, despite the car's hefty 2200kg weight.

The fuel cell is supplied by Symbio but the aim is to allow teams to use their own fuel cell system if they wish.

Batteries come from Fortescue WAE, which opened a technical centre at Kidlington, Oxfordshire, in 2023 and also provided the batteries for Extreme E. Extreme H batteries will be produced there too, but they have a slightly smaller capacity than those used in Extreme E, as the main power source is now the fuel cell.

As with Extreme E, the cars are manufactured by Spark Racing Technology, based at Tigery, outside Paris. Each one is 6m long with a wheelbase of 3.2m (so roughly the same as a BMW 7 Series) and based on a tubular spaceframe chassis with front impact structures.

The Pioneer 25 passed its mandatory FIA chassis crash tests last year. Compared with an Extreme E car, the Pioneer 25 has a strengthened chassis, extra carbon-composite crash structures over the hydrogen tanks and energy-absorbing composite structures on either side of the car.

High- and low-pressure hydrogen systems were fitted during the tests and both were fully pressurised to ensure neither would lose any pressure. The cars also completed FIA resilience tests for tanks and batteries before testing could take place, so the race series should be a useful demonstration of the robustness of fuel cell technology generally, given the pounding they will take.

Symbio's fuel cell stack can be replaced by a team's own

CRACKDOWN ON MOT FRAUD COMES UNDER FIRE

DVSA's new test verification process is fallible, claims former inspector

The government's plan to tackle the most common form of MOT test fraud has been criticised by a former inspector who claims reduced levels of enforcement are undermining standards.

Around 80% of fraudulent pass certificates issued each year are for cars that haven't been inspected – known as 'ghost MOTs'.

Since 2023, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), which administers MOT tests, has been trialling ways of stamping out this practice.

Last month, it told the UK's 60,000 MOT testers that one solution requires them to take a photograph of the car they are testing in their garage's test bay. Taken using the tester's own phone or tablet, the image should show the front or rear of the car, including the numberplate. It can be taken only after the tester has entered the vehicle's VIN and registration into the agency's online MOT Testing System (MTS). It must then be immediately uploaded to the same system before the test can continue.

"Whilst it's only a small number of testers who bring disrepute to the industry by committing fraudulent MOTs, it does happen, and this undermines the important work the rest of you do every day to keep vehicles safe," said the DVSA's head of MOT policy, Chris Price.

"Knowing if a vehicle is where it should be at the time of test should reduce the number of MOTs carried out when the vehicle isn't present or isn't the same vehicle as the details being entered into [the system]. This will help all of us to crack down on fraud."

However, Autocar has spoken to a former MOT test enforcement inspector who believes the DVSA's solution is flawed. The inspector, who asked not to be identified, said that using a tester's own camera risked the image of the car and test bay being altered by digital tools such as Photoshop.

"I don't think the DVSA realises quite how far this stuff has come on," he said. "Using a DVSA device rather than the tester's phone would give the agency better control. When I was an inspector, to try to improve security I would always ask myself 'how can I fiddle the process?', and I believe the camera solution can be fiddled."

The former inspector, who served for around a decade, believes cuts in the number of MOT inspectors employed by the DVSA have contributed to an increase in ghost MOTs and other fraud.

He said: "There were around seven inspectors in my region [in the late 2010s]. Now there's just one, who I calculate must be responsible for hundreds of garages. I know of some garages that haven't had an inspection visit for seven years. I believe testing standards are suffering as a result."

Meanwhile, a serving MOT tester told Autocar he believed the DVSA is increasingly shifting enforcement from inspectors to testers.

"I spend more time completing forms than testing cars," he said. "It does increasingly feel like we're doing the DVSA's work."

Responding to the criticisms, Price said: "DVSA enforcement examiners will continue to play a key role in tackling fraud. Taking a photo of the vehicle present at test will help provide us with information to target our enforcement efforts and we do not view it as an alternative to our enforcement work. It will also act as a deterrent to those looking to exploit the system."

Regarding current enforcement staffing levels, Price said: "The DVSA has 102 full-time-equivalent examiners who solely do MOT work, a specialist MOT Investigation team and a dedicated MOT Intelligence Hub. The DVSA's overall effort on MOT enforcement has been consistent in recent years and its performance in catching offenders has improved year on year."

The DVSA's camera trial is part of a long-running campaign to root out fraud in the system. Between 2020 and 2022, 687 MOT testers were disqualified by the DVSA and a further 228 in the 2022-23 period.

The DVSA's director of enforcement, Marian Kitson, said: "The DVSA is fully committed to taking action against anyone who undermines the integrity of the MOT service and compromises road safety."

JOHN EVANS

ONE IN 10 PASSED CARS SHOULD HAVE FAILED

A Freedom of Information request has revealed that more than 10% of cars that passed their MOT tests in 2023 should have failed. That's some 2.9 million cars with potentially dangerous defects.

This information was contained in a report by a team of DVSA compliance examiners who retested a random selection of 1487 cars at the sites they were originally assessed.

The DVSA launched disciplinary actions against 14 garages and wrote 67 advisory warning letters to others.

MOST COMMON AREAS IN WHICH THE DVSA DISAGREED WITH THE MOT TESTING STATION

Tyres	731 defects disagreed
Brakes	678
Suspension	629
Lights, reflectors, electrics	392
Non-component advisories	157
Visibility	147
Noise, emissions and leaks	135
Body, chassis and structure	127
Steering	59
Vehicle identification	50
Seatbelts	40
Wheels	25

GETTY IMAGES

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

MONDAY

As Ford shovels a cool €4.4 billion (£3.7bn) into its German division to offset its hideous European unprofitability, I wonder how the bosses who killed the Fiesta are feeling right now. Safely retired or fired, I suppose. It's not often that a big, canny car manufacturer like the Blue Oval blunders into dropping a market-topper that could have continued for two or even three years. In fact, this must be one of Ford's top 10 cock-ups in 122 years. Come on, Henry! You were our automotive leader! You used to be so good at seeing the future! Give us a sign that you know what you're doing.

TUESDAY

Great morning at Morgan seeing its new £100k flagship, the Supersport, unveiled inside one of the Malvern Link workshops turned into a live studio so that Richard Hammond's Chimp TV production firm could stream it to the world.

It was fun for a TV agnostic to witness the "everyone cheer when I say" hoopla that goes with filming, but for me it was the beauty of the new model – in development for three years – that took centre stage. According to Morgan MD Matt Hole, it was the finished Supersport that spawned the recent 50-off Midsummer, not the other way around.

So much has changed at Morgan. It used to make old-school cars for old people, but today the company is propelled by young creative teams led by an inspired and energetic top management; there's not an old fart in sight. Whereas the cars were once very definitely hand-built (with all the variability this implied), they're now almost watch-like in their quality, baked in by top-class materials and a much-refined hand-building process.

Strong signs that the recent American launch of the Plus Four is working really well are adding to the optimism.

Managing director Matt Hole epitomises the youthful energy of modern Morgan

WEDNESDAY

You can often draw accurate impressions from short notes. I once hired a chief sub entirely on the strength of two perfect paragraphs he put in a job application letter, and he turned out to be a fantastic colleague over many years. So I'm enormously encouraged by our first contact with Longbow, a new British sports car company that aims to have two sub-1000kg sports cars, the Roadster and Speedster, on the market next year (see p14). Its clever initial announcement (find it at longbowmotors.com) is a rare example of strong claims and impressive founders' back stories mixed with a degree of restraint that avoids insulting the reader's intelligence.

Killing the Fiesta looks like one of Ford's all-time blunders

Prospective new car firms come and (mainly) go, because taking a new car concept all the way from idea to production is 20 times harder than simply building a nice one-off. On the journey, hopefuls keep their morale boosted by scattering the ether with claims so bullish that the finished product has to be a disappointment. Longbow, which started in 2023 and has been running under the radar until now, seems nothing like that. We look forward to knowing them better.

THURSDAY

A long day's writing at home, occasionally glancing fretfully through the window at the red Jeep Wrangler Sahara and orange Ford Ranger Raptor sitting idly outside. I can't account for why I like such vehicles so much – high-riding toughness plus immunity from potholes and kerb strikes is only a part of it – but I really feel lucky to have the pair at my disposal.

A neighbour suggests the set would be completed if there were a World War II Jeep in the shed for warm-weather pub trips, and it suddenly looks a great idea. A decent one would set me back £20,000 mind.

> **"Come on! Give us a sign that you know what you're doing"**

AND ANOTHER THING

I'm surprised to see the wholesale collapse in Tesla sales, seemingly because people have decided they hate Elon Musk so much that they don't want one of 'his' cars. It's not that simple, of course. Much of Tesla's achievement was down to Peter Rawlinson and his teams. Indeed, Tesla's progress has been slower since Rawlinson left for Lucid. Still, used Teslas are among the best EVs going. Cheap now, too. See p56 for more.

GET IN TOUCH

steve.cropley@haymarket.com

PRIOR CONVICTION

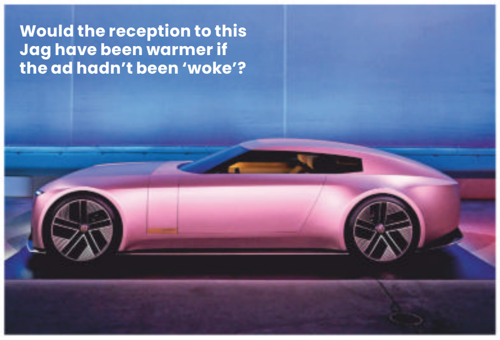
Matt Prior

‘Go woke, go broke’, goes a catchphrase beloved by below-the-line internet commenters when a company adopts a controversially progressive stance. And like so many clichés, its origins have some truth behind them. When Bud Light partnered a transgender influencer in 2023, it cost its brewer roughly a 28% drop in profits and itself its position as the US’s best-selling beer. American retail giant Target’s share price took a 10% hit when it launched some controversial Pride-month merchandise in the same year.

Saying you really love a cause when not everybody feels the same way carries corporate risk. And it works both ways: there are protests or boycotts against non-progressive company stances too, of course, whether perceived or otherwise; pushback against corporate ethics that people think are particularly nasty.

Basically, if someone shouts particularly loudly about an issue they say really matters to them, I don’t suppose it should be a surprise when people shout back.

Although it can be: Jaguar said it didn’t mean to send any particular messages, take any stance or alienate anyone with its ‘copy nothing’ advert last year, but that didn’t stop it being perceived that way. Given that the company doesn’t have any new cars to sell at the moment, it has time to work it out and perhaps, even if it has been wrongly understood, it will inadvertently end up on the right side of things. Because I wonder if the sands are shifting a bit.



Would the reception to this Jag have been warmer if the ad hadn’t been ‘woke’?

Here we must talk about Elon Musk, whose positions as de facto head of the US government’s new Department of Government Efficiency and agitator for right-wing politics and mocker of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy on social media bin fire X haven’t been doing his car company any huge favours in recent weeks. Tesla’s shares are down and, depending on where you look, its sales are too. As the Financial Times titled it last week: “Tesla stock is falling because Elon Musk’s stock is falling.”

We will have to wait to see how much this matters, because while it feels significant, it might be just online fuss that passes. Loads of people buy things from companies or places they don’t like, knowingly or otherwise, all the time, and saying you’re not going to is about the easiest thing you can do. I’m not buying anything Russian at the moment, but given that I wasn’t likely or able to anyway, it turns out that’s a doddle and makes no difference – something that Tesla might note about the kinds of people currently planning to protest against Musk outside its US retailers.

And while I know that I would prefer to be seen in a Jaguar than a Tesla, the company with the Oval Office’s chief scruffbag will sell 1.5 million or more cars this year, while the one with the pink advert will sell none.

> **“Loads of people buy things from firms or places they don’t like”**

So it’s rather hard to argue that what’s known as virtue signalling – the root cause of the ‘go woke, go broke’ cliché – feels a less cringy or controversial thing to do than it did only a couple of years ago. Still, call it a hunch, a bit of Spidey-sense or whatever, but the ethics, principles and actions of companies seem to have been thrown into wider focus.

It should be possible to distinguish between a company employee’s politics and the company itself. We’ve all met people who have some pretty rum viewpoints, they’ve all worked somewhere and we can usually dissociate the two. The thing about Musk is that he makes that so difficult.

Other companies don’t. Witness a letter to The Telegraph’s motoring advice page in January, in which a man said he would like a replacement for his MG, electric, preferably flat-floored and which would fit his dogs but importantly not something made by the Chinese, thank you very much. To which our friend Alex Robbins, the paper’s car agony uncle, delicately pointed out that not only was his current car, with its famous British nameplate, made in China but by a brand wholly owned by the Chinese state.

Every time something like this happens, I’m reminded of a quote whose origin I wish I could remember. I think it was about Nissan’s Sunderland plant. When asked why it was successful, a manager said: “Keep your head down. Make cars people want.” I wonder if more people should take his advice.

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

Elon Musk is now closely associated with Donald Trump. Ergo, so is Tesla

GETTY IMAGES

RACING LINES

Damien Smith

After much back and forth, Cadillac will join F1, led by Brit Graeme Lowdon

It's official, then: Cadillac will line up next year as Formula 1's 11th team. The American luxury car brand has hit all the criteria to be admitted to motor racing's most exclusive club, after its first approach as a partner in Andretti Global's attempted entry was rejected.

Finally, the right outcome, thanks largely to a bigger commitment from parent company General Motors for Cadillac to become much more than a badge on the side of a racing car. The pledge is that between now and the end of the decade this will become a "full works" team powered by a genuine GM powertrain.

For the time being, we can expect to see a Ferrari-powered Caddy on the grid. How's that for an automotive oxymoron?

A FAMILIAR FACE

The new team is a partnership between GM and TWG Motorsports, which owns Andretti Global. Michael Andretti, perceived as too combative, is not involved, although his F1 world champion father Mario takes an ambassadorial role.

Clinching an entry will accelerate an already active recruitment drive across three bases in the US (in Indiana, Michigan and North Carolina) and the Silverstone site from which the team will operate. Plenty of familiar F1 faces have already pitched up, among them team principal Graeme Lowdon, who put in much of the groundwork to secure Cadillac's place at the top table.

A successful entrepreneur and qualified engineer, the 59-year-old from Northumberland was a popular sporting director at the small Manor F1 team during its time running as Virgin and Marussia, leaving before its final season as MRT in 2016.

I first met Lowdon and his wife Wendy at the launch of a start-up Formula Renault team that they co-founded back in 1996. An alliance with Manor founder John Booth and subsequent rise from the UK national scene all the way to F1 gave Lowdon valuable insight into the reality of top-level motorsport. Softly spoken and personable, he will ease Cadillac into F1 without hurting precious egos – but also won't be taken for a fool.

> "The perception of the FIA has never been so low"

Starting an F1 team from scratch is daunting, but Lowdon has done it before – and this time he should get the financial backing to make it stick.

POLITICAL STORM CLOUDS

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem declared the Cadillac entry a "transformative moment" for F1. He probably sees it as a personal triumph, having backed the introduction of an 11th team in the face of initial and substantial resistance from F1 itself. In truth, he needed a win in the final year of what has been a turbulent first term in office.

Ben Sulayem was elected in December 2021, having promised to take a light, hands-off, non-executive approach to global motorsport governance. As it happens, the opposite has been the case. His tendency to be seen in all the big moments – as the first to congratulate winning F1 drivers, for example – was at first amusing, but there has been nothing funny about the string of controversies he has triggered, from his alleged historic views on women to changes to the FIA statutes on accountability to the high turnover of experienced senior figures. The perception of the FIA has never been so low.

Ben Sulayem has been publicly challenged over his leadership

Even some who originally backed him have realised their mistake. Among them is Motorsport UK chairman (and Prodrive chief) David Richards. He has gone public with what amounts to a vote of no confidence in Ben Sulayem, via a strongly worded letter sent to all MSUK members that threatens legal action over the FIA's governance if his concerns are not addressed. Ben Sulayem has fallen short of the "gold-standard levels of transparency, accountability and integrity in sports governance" demanded of his role, wrote Richards, who felt compelled to act following a "final straw": he and other FIA members being barred from an FIA World Council meeting when they refused to sign a non-disclosure agreement, which Richards considered a "gagging order".

At 72, Richards is officially too old to stand as president himself, due to a statute imposed during this term of governance. Then again, it's unlikely that he either wants or needs the job. But might he prove kingmaker to a candidate ready to stand against Ben Sulayem in the end-of-year election? Contenders are likely to soon emerge. Susie Wolff, who has brought a legal action against the FIA following a compliance row over her role running the all-female F1 Academy series, is one name thrown up.

Brace yourselves: storms ahead.

BUYER FOR BERNIE

Bernie Ecclestone's stunning collection of 69 grand prix cars (Autocar, 12 February) has been sold as a job lot. The buyer is Mark Mateschitz, son of the late Red Bull founder Dietrich, the price estimated at around £500 million.

It's pleasing that the collection remains intact, especially as Mateschitz apparently has plans to display them publicly. It sounds like they have gone to a good home.

GETTY IMAGES / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

Letter of the week

THE SHELVES ARE BARE

I would like to endorse everything Alan Roadley said on the subject of spare parts (5 March).

I have had a succession of such issues with both our Range Rover Autobiography and our Jaguar I-Pace. Time and again, I've been told that I must await the arrival of spare parts, with the dealer telling me that those parts are on back order with no visibility of when they will be available. This applies both to exotic components and, in some cases, much-used items that you would expect every dealer to have on hand.

My longest wait approached four months, and the most recent excuse – for both cars – was that the parts were "coming from Ukraine".

Every manufacturing industry has put in place 'just-in-time' methodologies, with the objective of achieving 'zero inventories' at every stage of the process to reduce capital employed – no raw material inventory, no work-in-progress inventory, no finished goods inventory. Obviously this drive has been taken to the extreme in the supply of new cars – and somebody forgot the customer.

Ron Petersen
Wendover, Buckinghamshire

FREE OF CHARGE

I recently received a recall notice from Ford stating that my Kuga PHEV's high-voltage battery may have a fault that could lead to an internal short circuit, potentially causing a fire, and as a result I must not plug in my car to charge the battery and use only the Auto EV driving mode until a software fix is available, which Ford estimates will be in the second quarter of the year.

This means that for at least a few weeks I will be unable to use my car as a plug-in hybrid and will have to rely entirely on the petrol engine. This not only undermines the primary reason for purchasing a PHEV – to reduce fuel costs and emissions – but also increases my running costs considerably.

I contacted Ford directly and they confirmed that they will not be offering any compensation for this inconvenience. Given that this is a manufacturer defect and not a result of owner misuse, I find it unacceptable that affected customers are expected to bear the financial burden.

Gregory Fedyk
Via email

MAKE JAG GREAT AGAIN

Jaguar's rebrand had me convinced, but your interview with Rawdon Glover (5 March) dampened my optimism. If you want the new cars to drive like the old ones, how can you call the powertrains secondary? If you claim to be led by design, why depict your brand as a by-product of a technology switch? And what is the point of a car driving like a Jaguar if it doesn't look like one to most people anyway?

Maybe no further explanation was needed. Just as Glover's team didn't anticipate the slowdown in EV demand, it surely didn't foresee the anti-woke backlash – especially from the American market, which it can't do without. Yet with empty showrooms, it has been thriving on what makes brands today: social media noise.

I can't stop thinking the Type 00 concept would have fared better as a Tesla Cybercoupé. Still, its cheeky Miami Pink paint job feels like a playful jab at Elon Musk's America. Imagine starting a conversation with the one you coincidentally end up thumbing your nose at. Happy accidents happen. Let's hope Glover's production cars will make Jaguar great again.

Maxime Engels-Deutsch
Paris, France

I JUST CAN'T SEE IT

As a 77-year-old who was brought up from an early age with Jaguars of various models, from early MkVIIs to Mk2s to E-Types, I can say that they all offered excellent driver visibility, due to large areas of glass. Looking at the new design, I can only assume that it is aiming for autonomous driving controlled purely by camera and screens, as outward visibility will be dangerously limited, due to very small areas of glass and no rear window.

Let's hope that JLR also improves its quality control and supply of parts should, heaven forbid, anything fail.

I sincerely wish Rawdon Glover and his team at Jaguar every success.

Terry Dudleston
Inverness-shire

Jaguar definitely offered 'grace, space and pace' in the '60s

Boss Glover has laid a narrow, EV-only path to success

Type 00 concept has failed to win over many long-time customers

GETTY IMAGES

DOOMED TO FAIL

Jaguar's heritage is based on many things, but the three strongest contenders must be: beautiful cars, not just 'striking', 'brave' or 'different' ones; engineering excellence done with value that delights customers and confounds competitors; and relevance to the man or woman in the street who would admire Jaguar designs, making them goals to aspire to.

In addition, EVs will only ever account for 30% of the global new car market, "no matter how much progress they make", according to Akio Toyoda, chairman of the world's largest car manufacturer by volume, Toyota – and I would back his verdict against any and every groupthink politician the world over.

The six pages of Jaguar coverage in the 5 March issue were the six most valueless pages I've ever read in Autocar in nearly 60 years. The people at Jaguar are clearly completely and utterly deluded and very much in love with themselves, rather than reality.

Stand by for a re-relaunch in five to six years, by which time Rawdon Glover will have destroyed Jaguar's legacy, dealers and balance sheets.

Adrian Jackson
Darlington, County Durham

STYLE CANCEL

So Rawdon Glover thinks Jaguar can take market share from Bentley, does he? As someone who has had a 3.8 Mk2, an XJ40 Sovereign, an S-Type and an XKR in his garage, I probably qualify as one of the older enthusiasts who he claims he does not want to abandon. I can recall when the Jaguar advertising strapline was 'Grace, space and pace'. That certainly applied to the Mk and XJ series until they began to look like their German competitors. Those cars had style.

Now, beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but pug ugliness is something that most people can recognise. The Type 00 concept with its slab front and thin glass is about as stylish as a house brick. Perhaps Mr Glover is unable to recognise style when he sees it.

A smug expression with arms folded implies a defensive unwillingness to listen. I hope for Jaguar's future that my interpretation of his body language is incorrect and the production cars are better-looking than the concept. Otherwise I shall stick with my Bentley Continental GTC.

Arthur Kay
Via email

RAW DEAL

I was fascinated to read your interview with Rawdon Glover, using the article to further explain how the Jaguar rebranding episode didn't convince petrolheads and other critics. For example, he now apologises for the lack of empathy towards past loyal Jaguar enthusiasts by saying he wanted them to join the new electric journey. That is hardly going to happen with a selling point starting at £100,000! Anyway, it's electric, and many enthusiasts will never go there. That was one of a few U-turns in the article.

A rethink was indeed necessary, but then look at the decision for this EV-only rebranding, which goes back to 2021. Now understand that, due to market trends, many major brands are having to change their all-electric future plans and maintain the manufacture of petrol-engined cars for some time to come.

I wish Jaguar well but somehow think it has missed the boat on an all-electric future. We will learn the outcome soon enough.

Barry Coupe
Via email

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 26 MARCH

FIRST DRIVE

ROLLS SPECTRE BLACK BADGE

With 650bhp, this EV is the most powerful car Rolls-Royce has made. Its maker calls it "the apex of dominance". We'll be the judge of that

ROAD TEST

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH'S MOMENT OF TRUTH

New-era V12 flagship undergoes 10 pages of detailed road test scrutiny

ROAD TRIP

JERSEY VIA A KIA PICANTO

Steve Cropley tours the beautiful Channel Island in its best-selling car

EVERY WEEK

USED BUYING GUIDE

PORSCHE PANAMERA

How to grab a 911-inspired luxury saloon for a mere £30k

MY CAR & I

LANCIA FULVIA

This is the owner's second Fulvia after the first met a surprising fate

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AUTOCAR

The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

EDITORIAL
Email autocar@haymarket.com
Editor Mark Tisshaw
Editor-in-chief Steve Cropley
Magazine editor Rachel Burgess
Associate editor James Attwood
Managing editor Sami Shah
Editor-at-large Matt Prior
Digital editor Murray Scullion
Deputy editor Felix Page
Road test editor Matt Saunders
Deputy road test editor Richard Lane
Road tester Illya Verpraet
News editor Will Rimell
Staff writers Charlie Martin, Sam Phillips, Jack Warrick
Editorial assistants Danny Davies, Alex Wolstenholme
Chief sub-editor Kris Culmer
Senior syndication manager Tom Evans
Group art editor Stephen Hopkins
Art editor Sarah Özgül
Designer Tara Tuohy
Senior photographer Max Edleston
Photographer Jack Harrison
Videographer Sergiu Avram
Picture editor Ben Summerell-Youde
Social media executive Jonathan Bryce
Content creator apprentice Sophia Grace

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
European editor Greg Kable
Motorsport editor Damien Smith
Business correspondent Nick Gibbs
Technology correspondent Jesse Crosse
Senior correspondent John Evans
Senior contributing writer Andrew Frankel
Regular contributors John Bradshaw, Richard Bremner, Alastair Clements, Tim Dickson, James Disdale, Peter Liddiard, Peter McSean, Richard Webber, Will Williams

MEDIA ENQUIRIES
Email autocar@haymarket.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Tel 0344 848 8816
Overseas +44 (0)1604 251450
Email subscriptions.team@haymarket.com

SYNDICATION ENQUIRIES
Tel +44 (0)1962 867705
Contact Simon Fox
(simon@foxsyndication.com)

LICENSING ENQUIRIES
Contact Kate Hannam
(kate.hannam@haymarket.com)

BACK ISSUES
Tel 0344 848 8816
Email help@autocar.themagazineshop.com

ADVERTISING
Head of trading and agency development Richard Potton
(richard.potton@haymarket.com)
Account manager (display) Millie Remie
(millie.remie@haymarket.com)

PRODUCTION
Tel +44 (0)20 8267 5639
Head of production operations
Trevor Simpson
Group production manager Ailsa Donovan

MANAGEMENT
Managing director Rachael Prasher
Marketing director Darren Pitt

© 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Autocar, Motor, Autocar & Motor are registered trademarks.
Circulation enquiries: Frontline Ltd, 1st Floor, Stuart House, St John's Street, Peterborough, PE1 5DD (01733 555161). Printed by William Gibbons, Wolverhampton. Registered as a newspaper with the Royal Mail. Member of the ABC. ISSN 1355-8293.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form except by permission. The publisher makes every effort to ensure contents are correct but cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions. Unsolicited material is submitted to Autocar entirely at the owner's risk; the publisher accepts no responsibility for loss or damage.
With regret, competitions and promotional offers, unless otherwise stated, are not available to readers outside the UK and Eire.

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

24 VAUXHALL MOKKA

26 BMW X3 M50

28 SKODA ELROQ

34 MERCEDES-BENZ E450D ESTATE

HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

TESTED 11.3.25, LINCOLNSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

ABARTH 600E SCORPIONISSIMA

Does heated-up electric crossover feel aloof or alive?

What few attempts have been made to reimagine the classic hot hatch format for the electric age have been tepid at best, but is that now beginning to change? Car makers do seem to be waking up to the fact that adding an extra motor to an otherwise sedate EV and stiffening the chassis doesn't automatically result in a rewarding B-road reprobate. They've clocked the fact that nobody is rushing to swap their Hyundai i20 N for a Volkswagen ID 3 GTX.

There's something reassuring about the French having led the charge in the rehabilitation of a format that Brits have always loved. They're time-honoured leaders in the field, and the new Alpine A290 does lift-off oversteer and costs a sensible-for-2025 amount, at around £33k. We like it. And the Italians are at it too, with Abarth's lairy take on the Fiat 600e.

The salient bits for the top-rung Scorpionissima version tested here are as follows: 278bhp, front-wheel drive, Torsen front differential, 225-section Michelin tyres.

In terms of power-to-weight ratio, contact patch and hardware, the car is spookily similar to the Ford Focus RS – and not the hardcore Mk3 but the thoroughbred Mk1. Just 5bhp per tonne separates the two (in the Abarth's favour). And as for length? Only 4mm. You can't therefore argue that the 600e doesn't present, at least on paper, as a hot hatch in the traditional mould.

Under the bodywork, whose deck-like rear wing is intended to reference historic racing Abarth 500s, with their pinned-open-horizontal engine lids, there are anti-roll bars 140% stiffer than those on the Fiat 600e that lurk within. The front spring rates are also up 41%, as well as being cushioned by Abarth-specific hydraulic bump stops. At the front you will find Alcon brakes whose discs are a meaty 380mm in diameter, and while the car uses regenerative braking to boost efficiency most of the time, in its uppermost driving mode, Scorpion Track, it's disabled to give the driver

Performance is eye-widening but so is the ride comfort

"Renaultsport fans probably will enjoy how its nose hunts a little on corrugated roads"

ABARTH
RX74 GFA

TESTER'S NOTE There are two versions of the Abarth 600e, with the basic one costing £37k and having 'only' 235bhp. It doesn't get the Sabelt seats and plenty of other kit besides. **RL**

Alcantara and luminous stitching look cool but can't distract from cheap shared bits

real pad-on-disc feel at all times. Naturally, Abarth has also made big changes to the steering and ESP calibrations.

The result of all this is what Abarth calls the Perfo e-CMP platform. We will see more of it in the future.

To the cockpit. Dramatic Sabelt buckets, whose angular carcasses lay waste to the rear leg room, set an extroverted tone and are supportive if also undeniably high-set. The steering rim – a neat two-spoker – is small, firm and faintly evocative of Japanese sports coupés of the mid-1990s. There's racy accenting and Alcantara dotted about, but the compromises needed to bring a serious electric hatch to market at less than £40k are evident. Textured they may be, but swathes of hard plastic are impossible to ignore and the dull switchgear is as per every other Stellantis product. To compensate, acid green is splashed all over the two digital displays.

So this hot 600e (of which Abarth hopes to shift one for every five of its Fiat sibling) looks like a proper hot hatch and respects the norms of the breed with its fun-though-a-bit-low-rent cabin and lack of rear halfshafts. But does it really feel like a proper hot hatch when you hit a decent country road? Could it ever, with its 1640kg heft?

Yes and no. Even though the centre of gravity is helpfully low, the measures taken to contain the weight of the car are immediately obvious, because the ride quality is… robust. Whether it's unacceptably so will depend on how an individual prefers a hot hatch. Volkswagen Golf GTI fans won't warm to this degree of reactivity, but anybody who has enjoyed Renaultsport efforts of the past 20 years will probably accept it and the sense of fizzing alertness it brings.

The same people will probably enjoy the way the 600e's nose hunts a little on corrugated roads, the suspension geometry, grippy Michelins and diff combining to fire loadings up the steering column in vaguely Morse-code fashion but the result never becoming unruly.

That said, you can see why the torque delivery is mapped conservatively, ramping up progressively instead of the instant stabbing that many car makers think the customer wants (I don't. Do you?). When you're really on it, and even in Scorpion Track mode, which is the only way to have all 278bhp at your disposal, torque-steer isn't nearly as much of a problem as you might expect.

Finding a rhythm therefore isn't difficult. The relationship between steering, diff and throttle is nicely synchronised. You get a ton of traction on mid-corner and exit, and point to point the car is heroically quick.

Where I struggled to gel with it was turn-in. Its weight is palpable on a trailing throttle and the steering is a bit mute on the subject of grip, so you don't often have the confidence to sling the car into bends. If you do manage it, there isn't quite enough easy adjustability to be savoured. Conversely, put the 600e down a really tricky road and the firm back axle can become self-adjusting too readily.

So this Abarth isn't the finest driving tool and neither is it the easiest thing to live with, not least because of its somewhat steady 100kW DC charging rate. But it is quick and it does have a distinct personality – one that's identifiably hot hatch, the way it used to be.

RICHARD LANE

TECH SPEC

ABARTH 600E SCORPIONISSIMA

Priced on par with petrol-engined alternatives and certainly pacy enough but a little blunt too

★★★½☆

Price £39,875
Engine Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 278bhp
Torque 254lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Kerb weight 1640kg
0-62mph 5.9sec
Top speed 124mph
Battery 54.0/51.0kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 199 miles, 3.4mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Alpine A290, Cupra Born

TESTER'S NOTE
The Mokka's 350-litre boot capacity is unremarkable for the class: the Puma manages 457 litres, the T-Cross 455 litres and the Renault Captur 444 litres. **JB**

TESTED 6.3.25, KENT **DELIVERIES** MAY

VAUXHALL MOKKA

Mid-life update to small crossover primarily concerns the interior...

As we well know, jacked-up superminis can fly off the shelves. The Ford Puma is regularly at the top of the UK's best-sellers chart and the nation's Vauxhall dealers have managed to shift nearly 100,000 Mokkas since the current, second iteration went on sale in 2021.

Now the Mokka has received a facelift – although it is quite a minor one. There have been some trim-level revisions and the exterior has been treated to new light designs and black accents to replace less environmentally friendly chrome inlays.

Talking of sustainability, the interior – where most of the facelift money seems to have been spent – now contains hardy fabrics made from recycled plastics, an upgraded infotainment system and a new steering wheel with the same design seen in the new Frontera (which is smaller) and the new Grandland (which is larger). And there's some substance to match the style, with the materials being soft to the touch and the upholstery plush-feeling.

Head room is generous in the back, although rear-seat passengers with longer legs might struggle behind a driver taller than 6ft.

The driving position is okay, although we would like to have some more adjustment in the steering column, and better under-thigh support from the seat.

Vauxhall's Pure Panel dashboard arrangement returns in enhanced form. The touchscreen now runs updated software, and whereas before the standard central touchscreen was 8in, now it matches the digital instrument display at 10in – and that display itself has been given some revised graphics.

Generally it's a pretty intuitive system to use, featuring a shortcut button that takes you back to the home screen and – praise be – physical rotary dials for the air conditioning, although the menus do lack some configurability.

The engine line-up is fairly simple and largely unchanged.

Ride comfort remains a weakness, albeit less so the faster you go

You can have a 1.2-litre turbo petrol three-pot mated to either a six-speed manual gearbox (with 134bhp) or an eight-speed automatic (with 128bhp). You can also have that engine in hybrid form (with 134bhp), although that restricts you to a six-speed dual-clutch automatic. There's an electric powertrain, too (see right). The 98bhp version of the 1.2-litre petrol has been dropped.

Each trim level – the choices are Design, GS or Ultimate – can be had with any powertrain you like. Equipment-wise, every Mokka gets LED lights, rear parking sensors and wireless phone mirroring. But because the levels of equipment aren't quite as generous as in an equivalent Puma or Volkswagen T-Cross, we would recommend stepping up to GS trim.

Prices start at £25,105, which is about average for the class: the Puma is £26,350, the T-Cross £24,895.

The petrol manual Mokka gives a decent blend of performance, refinement and efficiency. At 1294kg, it's comparatively light, so 134bhp and 169lb ft make it feel punchy enough for any situation.

“It’s comparatively light, so 134bhp makes it feel punchy enough for any situation”

It’s still a looker inside and the materials feel nicer than before

We do have a couple of gripes, though: the 1.2-litre engine emits a subdued but noticeable droning noise below 1500rpm and you need to keep it over 2000rpm to make any real progress.

Despite this, the fuel economy is competitive. The official figure is 49.6mpg and it doesn’t struggle to match that in reality: we got 46.2mpg in our time with the car.

In town, the Mokka’s light steering makes it easy to manoeuvre and the clutch pedal feels natural, although the gearchange has a rather long and vague throw, so it’s not one to save the manual with.

It isn’t the most settled or comfortable car in its class, and this mostly applies in town. On roads with long undulations, such as a motorway or a fast A-road, the ride is pretty supple, but in unevenly surfaced urban environments it becomes overly sharp.

There’s also a noticeable amount of body lean in tighter turns and the light steering can make it difficult to tell how much lock you need.

The effect of this is that the Mokka doesn’t excel in any particular area. While the petrol manual Mokka provides a decent blend of performance, refinement and efficiency, the Puma and T-Cross offer more engagement or comfort for similar money. It’s a safe bet, though, with no usability disasters, which is far from a given with new cars these days.

JONATHAN BRYCE

TECH SPEC

VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.2 TURBO 136PS GS

Looks as interesting as ever and performs creditably in key areas but still doesn’t excel in any of them

★★★½☆

Price £26,305
Engine 3 cyls in line, 1199cc, turbocharged, petrol
Power 134bhp at 5500rpm
Torque 169lb ft at 1750rpm
Gearbox 6-spd manual, FWD
Kerb weight 1294kg
0-62mph 9.1sec
Top speed 125mph
Economy 49.6mpg
CO_2, tax band 129g/km, 30%
Rivals Ford Puma, Nissan Juke, Peugeot 2008

TESTED 13.3.25, SURREY **DELIVERIES** NOW

VAUXHALL MOKKA ELECTRIC

...plus powertrain upgrades for EV

The electric Mokka now gets a larger battery as standard and a new damper tune focused on comfort, as well as the same design revisions as the ICE variant.

The 50.8kWh (usable capacity) battery has come from the old Long Range variant. In combination with improved energy efficiency, the extra capacity results in a 20% increase in claimed range over the pre-facelift standard model, to 252 miles.

It has the same 100kW maximum charging rate as before (slightly slower than that of the Renault Megane and new Kia EV3), meaning a fill from 20-80% takes 27 minutes.

The official efficiency rating of 4.0mpkWh is below average for the class (the upcoming Ford Puma Gen-E manages 4.7mpkWh), and you may struggle to match it in real-world driving. We averaged 3.5mpkWh over a week, equating to a disappointing 189 miles of range.

Vauxhall claims the motor has been reconfigured for quieter running while delivering more muscle: 154bhp and 192lb ft for a 0-62mph time of 9.0sec and 93mph top speed.

Perhaps more relevant is the way it delivers its performance: the torque is evenly metered out and you’re never left wanting for a greater turn of speed.

There are three driving modes available – Eco, Normal and Sport – plus a B mode that ramps up the regenerative braking to be quite strong. Sport is best left alone, simply because it adds nothing relevant to the driving experience.

Despite the retuned dampers, the Mokka fidgets around and subjects you to continual jolts on uneven surfaces. At least the ride settles down on A-roads and motorways.

Interior is identical to the ICE car’s, except 40 litres of boot is missing

Wind and road noise are more of an issue than in the ICE Mokka, too, and there’s an irritating wind whistle when you get above 60mph.

The steering is typically light, which makes the car easy to thread around town, visibility is decent and the brakes are nicely progressive. This combined with the powertrain’s agreeable urban manners would make it a natural choice for city drivers, but the ride quality lets it down.

This Mokka is adequate to drive, then, and as in the ICE version, the tech lift inside has been achieved without compromising usability. But it’s far from the most efficient or refined EV and it doesn’t keep you as comfortable as it could.

JONATHAN BRYCE

TECH SPEC

VAUXHALL MOKKA ELECTRIC ULTIMATE

Decent enough to drive but ride and efficiency are below par

★★★☆☆

Price £38,095
Engine Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 154bhp
Torque 192lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Kerb weight 1540kg
0-62mph 9.0sec
Top speed 93mph
Battery 54.0/50.8kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 252 miles, 4.0mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Mini Aceman, Renault Megane

TESTED 10.3.25, OXFORDSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

BMW X3 M50

New-generation SUV retains sporting six-cylinder option – a rarity now

BMW people – the really committed ones, whose blood runs blue and white like some Bavarian-themed toothpaste – love to speak in code. You might be pretty up to speed on your chassis codes (E30s, F20s, G30s and the like), but you can always go a step further with engine codes. I won't get too far into the weeds here, but there's one that's worth knowing: B58. It's BMW's current 3.0-litre turbo petrol straight six, and headquarters should have a shrine devoted to the thing, because it makes everything it powers better.

You will find it in everything from the plug-in hybrid X5 xDrive50e to esoterica like the Morgan Plus Six and Ineos Grenadier, and it's just as adept in the big SUV as it is in the retro sports car. In the off-roader, maybe not so much.

Its more natural home is in stuff like the M340i or this, the M50 version of BMW's best-selling X3 SUV. We've previously driven the 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol version of the new fourth-generation X3 and found a car with plenty of youthful style and practicality but that was short on some dynamic versatility and star quality. Put the B58 in and suddenly it all makes more sense.

This is an M Performance model, rather than a proper X3 M, but it feels surprisingly 'proper'. Nearly 400bhp and 0-62mph in 4.6sec is pretty serious stuff, and I think the B58 is a nicer engine than the M-spec S58. It's smoother, less laggy and doesn't sound like it runs on gravel. Response is outstanding and it shoves you forwards with very strong urge, while the familiar automatic 'box efficiently rifles through its eight gears.

The chassis isn't messing around either. Even in Comfort mode on the optional adaptive suspension, it rides very firmly. It's quite well

Suspension is so firm that even Comfort mode struggles to deal with bumpy UK roads

damped and not harsh, but it never really settles down, even on the motorway. Point it at a corner, however, and you will find the steering is very accurate, well weighted and even communicative, and there's an obvious rear bias to the four-wheel drive system. It's really good fun to drive, this X3.

Away from the fairytale world of empty B-roads, the picture is more complicated. Yes, that engine is a constant (but welcome) presence, and on a gentle motorway run it will do 38mpg (I averaged 33mpg over the course of a week), which is pretty impressive for a big, fast SUV.

But day to day, the X3 M50 can be a tiresome car. There's that ride, which is very busy, everywhere, all the time. You wonder why there's both a Comfort and a Sport mode when the former is already too firm for the road. The excellent seats and strong noise isolation save it from being downright uncomfortable.

The automatic 'box has gained the annoying trait of being slow to switch between drive and reverse, complicating three-point turns.

The cabin feels like a substantial downgrade from the previous X3.

It follows other recent BMWs in having a big, plastic light bar across the dashboard, which aims (but fails) to draw your attention away from all the plain and shiny black plastics and the wobbly parts.

For most of the dashboard and door cappings, BMW's designers copied their Mini colleagues' homework and coated all of it in a coarse-knitted fabric. It's great in a £30,000 Mini but less so in a BMW that costs more than twice that.

Then there's the control interface, which relies very heavily on the touchscreen. The trouble is that it's quite far away, has plenty of small icons and makes you scroll through endless lists of options to get at what you need. It's also not fully optimised for right-hand drive: the menu bar for Apple CarPlay is on the left of the screen.

The X3 retains BMW's classic rotary iDrive controller, but it might as well not do. It gives very little resistance when turned but quite a lot when pushed forwards, backwards or sideways, which makes it quite hard to be precise.

Furthermore, the shortcut buttons around it all feel the same and need to be pressed in exactly the right spot to respond. As a result, you need to look down to use them, which rather beats the point.

All this adds up to a similar conclusion to that which I came to about the Volvo EX90: nice to drive, annoying to use, with an interior that appears to be stripped of a lot of features and amenities.

The X3 is better than the EX90 on the user-friendliness front, though, and compact(ish) cars with a compelling many-cylinder engine are becoming a rarity. So yes, it does come down to that engine. With the V6 Porsche Macan leaving us soon and the Mercedes-AMG GLC 43 being left with only four cylinders, we're reduced to just the X3 M50, Audi SQ5 and Range Rover Velar P400 (plus the much pricier Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio and Maserati Grecale Trofeo). The Velar is more of a cruiser and we haven't driven the SQ5 in the UK yet. Looking at the X3 M50 in isolation, it is slightly annoying, but you might just forgive it for the engine.

ILLYA VERPRAET

"The steering is communicative and there's an obvious rear bias. It's really good fun to drive"

Ease of use, perceived quality and premium aura have all regressed from the old X3

TESTER'S NOTE

You only get a tacho if you select Sport mode, which is especially annoying in an M-badged BMW. Thankfully, Sport doubles as the configurable mode, so I selected it then set all the individual parameters to Comfort. **IV**

TECH SPEC

BMW X3 M50 xDRIVE

M50 makes good on the promises made by its looks and its name – but X3's usability, interior and ride aren't as good as they were before

★★★½☆

Price £68,480
Engine 6 cyls in line, 2998cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 393bhp at 5200-6250rpm
Torque 428lb ft at 1900-4800rpm
Gearbox 8-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 1980kg
0-62mph 4.6sec
Top speed 155mph
Economy 35.8mpg
CO_2, tax band 178g/km, 37%
Rivals Audi SQ5, Mercedes-AMG GLC 43

ŠKODA
KY25 OUX

ROAD TESTS

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5733**

SKODA ELROQ

Skoda shifts its focus to EVs, starting with a Scenic-rivalling compact SUV

MODEL TESTED
SKODA ELROQ 85 EDITION
Price £38,650
Power 282bhp
Torque 402lb ft
0-60mph 6.1sec
30-70mph 5.0sec
Top speed 111mph (claimed)
70-0mph 45.1m (14deg C, dry)
Range 246/270/370 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 3.2/3.5/4.8mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 112kW

Skoda has been cautious with its rollout of electric production cars since the Citigo iV of 2020. While rival brands have been populating as many niches as possible, the Czech firm has instead focused on the renewal of its established ICE and hybrid models over the past couple of years, while watching and waiting.

But all of that is about to change. Before 2026 is out, Skoda will have launched facelifted versions of both the Enyaq and Enyaq Coupé, but will also have introduced four all-new electric model lines – among them a Jeep Avenger-rivalling crossover supermini (the Epiq), a 4.7m-long estate and a 4.9m MPV-cum-SUV.

The subject of this road test – the Elroq – is the first member of the all-new foursome. A 4.5m-long compact SUV, it is intended to bring new credibility, practicality and affordability to the electric C-SUV segment. And it will aim to do that principally with ICE price parity – prices starting from less than £32,000 – but also Skoda's habitual focus on space, functionality and intuitive ease of use.

We elected to test an upper-tier, single-motor Elroq 85 Edition to scrutinise those claims.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★☆

PROS Wide range of battery and motor options; some distinguishing technical features; smart, tougher-looking design language
CONS Heavier than key rivals

The Elroq is the first all-new Skoda designed according to the firm's new Modern Solid design language. This dispenses with the big chrome grille and jewel-like features shared by many cars from Skoda over the past 10 years or so, and aims for a tougher, more contemporary look. Most testers agreed that there's some extra visual presence about the car, particularly from the front, where its slimmer 'grille' (Skoda actually refers to it as a 'tech deck', because it's where the forward-facing ADAS sensors are hidden) stretches the impression of visual width.

In one sense, it is an electric foil for the ICE Karoq (which Skoda has not announced plans to kill off). And on outright size, it sits almost equidistantly between a Nissan Qashqai and a Mazda CX-5.

Three model derivatives are offered at launch, all with a rear-mounted, single-motor layout, and having numbered model identities (Elroq 50, 60 and 85) that approximately correspond with their usable battery capacities (52kWh, 59kWh and 77kWh).

Vision 7S concept inspired Elroq design

Those derivatives are powered by water-cooled batteries assembled from modules produced at Skoda's own Mlada Boleslav factory. An Elroq 50 pack uses eight modules, a 60 pack nine and an 85 pack 12.

Power outputs from the Elroq's separately excited synchronous motor range from 168bhp to 282bhp. An Elroq 85x is set to join the showroom range later in 2025, adopting a smaller second motor for the front axle.

Suspension is all-independent, with coil springs and passive anti-roll bars at both axles, but the Volkswagen Group's finely adjustable DCC adaptive dampers are offered as an option on higher-grade cars, making for a technical point of difference with many rivals.

Trims rise from SE to SE L, Edition (as tested) and Sportline, the last of which coming with 20in wheels, lowered, sports-tuned suspension and a variable-ratio 'progressive' steering rack.

Our Elroq 85 Edition test car weighed 2085kg, in line with its 2044kg kerb weight influenced by a few options. That makes it heavy compared with rivals (Renault Scenic E-Tech Long Range: 1916kg as tested; Kia EV3: 1858kg), though it's also relatively powerful.

INTERIOR

★★★★½

PROS Appealing use of textile trim; lots of practical cabin storage; good second-row head room; spacious, cleverly divided boot
CONS Not many tactile, soft-touch mouldings

The Elroq isn't the boxiest or loftiest compact SUV, but it's nonetheless easy to get into, and there's enough head room and base height adjustability to perch up high and boost visibility.

It has a modern, informal, lounge-like cabin that uses appealing cloth textiles as decoration. Easily smudged piano black trim was hardly to be found on our test car, whose Loft design selection gave it recycled grey cloth trim instead, on the dashboard, door panels, centre console and seats. Alternative designs (Lodge, Suite, Sportline) shift the balance of the materials used towards a more lavish or sporty feel, but all adopt recycled materials where possible.

The cabin's standard for material fit and finish is moderately good, with patterns and grains used cleverly to break up bigger hard mouldings where they appear (and they do appear fairly widely). Some fixtures could be more solidly secured, but none rattled or felt flimsy.

■ Crisper contours on the bonnet are part of the Elroq's more assertive look. Note there's also no Skoda badge on the leading edge here but confident 'SKODA' lettering instead.

■ Would this even be a Skoda if both front doors didn't have built-in umbrella-holders? Unfortunately, you get only one umbrella - unless you ask the dealer to throw in a second.

The Elroq has a small digital instrument binnacle whose content can be tailored easily via controls on the steering wheel spokes; a 13in touchscreen infotainment system central on the fascia; and quite a lot of oddment storage between the door bins (lined), cupholders (small, but adjustable for size), armrest cubby (with a removable drawer insert), and lower storage tray beneath the centre stack. The glovebox compartment is only half-sized on right-hand-drive cars. But further to the rear there's a removable storage box, with flexible cupholders, that can be placed on the cabin floor between the rear seats to stow drinks and keep devices safe, which is a clever, Skoda-typical feature. There are more cupholders, and a little additional storage, in the fold-down armrest.

Second-row passenger space is roughly class-typical, though there's plenty of head room for bigger, taller adults, and the car's cabin floor doesn't feel especially high.

But boot space is better. At 470 litres, it is claimed by Skoda to be class-leading, though Renault (whose Scenic has 540 litres) would beg to differ. According to our measurements, the Elroq's boot is indeed a little longer and wider than both the Scenic's and that of a Kia EV3 and Mini Countryman, however.

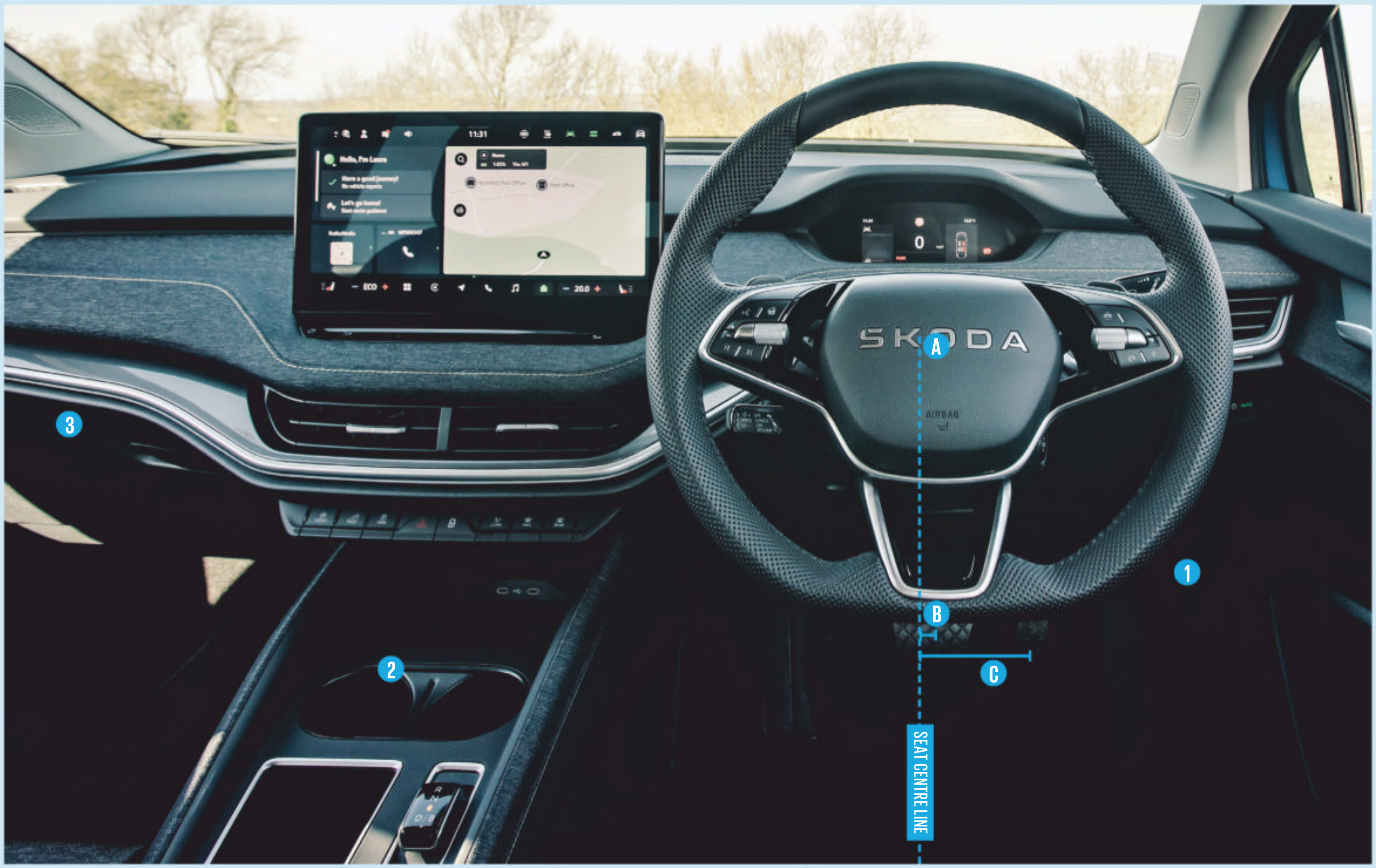
The storage area is particularly well featured. It really does feel as though Skoda has thought of ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

① Ambient lighting in the footwells and on the doors is standard; higher trims add it on the lower dashboard as well. It's subtle, gentle and reflected, and also quite low, so not distracting.

② Central cupholder is a bit small, but the divider can be moved left and right so bigger cups can fit. Contours on its base help to grip the contents for one-handed bottle-opening.

③ You get only a half-sized glovebox on a right-hand-drive car, a little disappointingly, due to the Elroq's fuse box location. But cabin storage is otherwise plentiful.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 35mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 165mm right. Plenty of manual adjustment range, both reach and rake, on the steering column here, and lots of seat height adjustment to sit either high or low.

◂ everything here. You can choose to keep your charging cable either in a deep underfloor cubby or in a dedicated storage net hanging from the bootlid. There are hooks, straps and useful smaller storage areas to both the left and right of the main load bay. And the parcel shelf itself can be set at normal or reduced height, to be used as a kind of split-level divider, if you prefer, or even clipped in almost vertically to keep taller items from falling into the passenger compartment.

MULTIMEDIA

★★★★☆

PROS Good top-menu, home screen usability; lots of user-customisable shortcuts; physical menu buttons make life easy
CONS No physical cursor controller; no physical heater controls

Skoda has developed its own menu layout for the Elroq's 13in infotainment system, which is a little like related Volkswagen Group systems but makes some noticeable gains on usability.

A configurable home screen gives you good top-level access to frequently used menus, but there are also user-customisable shortcut bars on both the upper and lower margins of the screen, which are always displayed, and therefore allow you to put the screens and functions you most frequently need within one touch of anywhere.

There are also physical shortcut buttons for the car's drive mode selection, ADAS, climate control and automated parking systems just below the central air vents, which are always reassuringly easy to find when driving, with minimal distraction. There's no physical cursor controller for the whole system, though, either on the centre console or steering wheel, which is a bit of a miss for a brand whose focus is so squarely on ease of use.

Wireless smartphone mirroring for both Apple and Android devices is standard, and an iPhone connection proved easy to make and very reliable. Air-conditioned wireless device charging (for one device only) is included with upper-tier models. A colour head-up display, meanwhile, with augmented reality navigation guidance can be added to Edition and Sportline cars as part of Skoda's Advanced Package (from £2250), though our test car didn't have it.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

PROS 85 is quicker than key rivals; regen paddles make for good drivability; little or no slower with a low state of charge
CONS Heavy chassis could make Elroq 50 a bit lethargic

The Elroq overcomes its weight disadvantage to post a strong showing on performance. Needing only 6.1sec to hit 60mph from rest, it is more than a second quicker than the Kia EV3 and quicker still than the Renault Scenic. At the motorway speeds to which its drive motor is just as well suited, its advantage over those rivals when accelerating from 50-80mph is similar.

It's quite rare for a mid-range Skoda to feel as assertive as this but, you could argue, it would be something of a failing if the upper-tier version of the car didn't have at least some sense of urgency and briskness in character.

The Elroq 85 certainly does. Using the same drive motor and reduction gearing that appears in Volkswagen's ID 7 and Cupra's Born VZ (albeit slightly detuned for peak power from the latter's spec), it can pour on plenty of pace in give-and-take motoring when the need arises.

Not so much that you feel obliged to drive it in a hurry, though. The car has progressively tuned throttle calibration (even from a full-power standing start, it doesn't tear away from rest), a decently progressive brake pedal and proper paddle-shift control of brake energy regen. Volkswagen still denies you the latter and Cupra has only started adding it recently. While we write about it a lot, it does make a telling difference to how you drive an EV, how engaged you feel while doing it and how much you feel you can contribute to its efficiency by effective reading of the road.

The car's performance also stood up very robustly to testing at a low state of charge, sacrificing a lot less than an EV3. While the battery begins to show some evidence of thermal stress once subjected to intensive demands for several minutes without a break, it's not a factor serious enough that you would encounter it on the road.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★★☆

PROS Quiet, supple, absorptive ride; appealing, uncorrupted steering; stable and secure at higher speeds

CONS Feels its weight on quicker country roads; not as agile or balanced as some rear-motor EVs

Our Elroq test car was well armed to impress in a rounded dynamic sense, rolling on mid-rank 19in wheels, without lowered sport suspension but with optional adaptive dampers. If this proves to be the optimal spec for the car's rolling chassis, we wouldn't be surprised.

The car does make its weight apparent when driven quickly, but it has clearly been tuned to feel settled and compliant-riding, comfortable and well isolated, while also remaining agile, tidy and wieldy enough when changing direction, and stable and secure at high speeds. It's very pleasant and easy to drive, with notes of tactile appeal about the uncorrupted fluency of its steering, but not a great deal to get excited about in terms of handling balance or entertainment factor more widely.

The Elroq is clearly the kind of car that's at its best when just getting on with the nuts and bolts of everyday motoring. Back those DCC dampers off towards the softer end of the scale and it's obligingly supple on typical dual carriageways and A-roads, without listing or heaving around. Firm them up again and you can dial in some extra body control for quicker B-road driving, but you are more likely to enjoy witnessing how comfortable the car can be when in no particular hurry.

Would an Elroq with a lighter, smaller drive battery feel that bit more taut and controlled? We don't know yet, but it's certainly worth noting that Skoda only offers DCC on the 85 version.

The car's slightly permissive suspension tuning began to feel more exposed during our limit handling testing on track, where body roll and pitching under braking felt quite pronounced, though neither undermined the Elroq's ultimate stability. Indeed, the car's ESC tuning (there is no function to select an ESC sport mode, or to switch it off) makes it quick and quite progressive when quelling both drive-related understeer and any lateral slip from the rear axle. The car's Kumho tyres (staggered for section width front and rear) also cope well in slippery and wet conditions.

ASSISTED DRIVING

★★★★☆

PROS Mostly unintrusive; lane keeping is better than some; easily deactivated
CONS Cars with all the convenience features get surprisingly pricey

SE-grade Elroqs get traffic sign recognition, blindspot detection and a manual cruise control as standard, and SE L adds nothing of significance as far as assisted driving is concerned.

With the Edition-spec car, however, Skoda's Travel Assist Plus system is included (automatic lane keeping, traffic jam assist and predictive adaptive cruise control). You can then pay extra for the Maxx Package, which adds remote parking via a smartphone among other things (LED matrix headlights, head-up display, Canton audio), but for quite a steep £5100.

The car's ADAS functions use live 'swarm data' from other networked Volkswagen Group cars to help with anything from hazard detection to automatic speed adaptation to effective lane keeping when markings are faint or sparse. The piloted cruise is quite good, but certainly not infallible or entirely unobtrusive on country roads.

Skoda makes it easy to toggle all of the systems on and off via a list menu that pops up at one press of a physical button. The car's driver monitoring can be a little irksome but need not irritate you for long.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★½

PROS Efficient at a cruise and around town; quick rapid charging; smaller batteries give a cheaper entry point
CONS Not quite the class-leading bargain you might think in higher trims, especially taking monthly finance into account

There will be quite a big gap between an entry-level Elroq 50 SE and an Elroq 85x on versatility, usability, range and performance, and clearly customers spending £31,500 on this car won't be getting the same experience as those paying more. Skoda has made lower-tier versions affordable by concentrating on catering to more modest requirements, leaving plenty of technology in optional packs that could inflate the cost of higher-spec cars beyond £40k.

But in as-tested upper-middle-tier trim and with its biggest battery and motor combination, where the Elroq is perhaps not quite the bargain it may otherwise appear, it's still a very competitive proposition.

Its performance is strong, but so is its efficiency, according to our testing, delivering a better motorway touring range than even a Renault Scenic E-Tech Long Range with 12% more battery capacity. The Elroq beat the Scenic's weighted average rapid-charging test result too and was level with that of Kia's EV3 (which also delivered poorer efficiency and touring range).

Skoda is currently offering flexible manufacturer-backed personal finance either with a £3000 deposit contribution or at 0% APR. Neither would, according to the manufacturer finance calculators, make our 85 Edition test car quite as cheap per month as an equivalent Scenic E-Tech or Vauxhall Grandland Electric, but it would beat an EV3 on like-for-like terms. ▸

FRONT Leg room 1100mm, head room 1040mm. Lots of space for tall drivers. Seats are comfy but there's no cushion extension or angle adjustment.

REAR Leg room 780mm, head room 970mm. More head room than in rivals, a comfy sitting position and plenty of amenities between the outer seats.

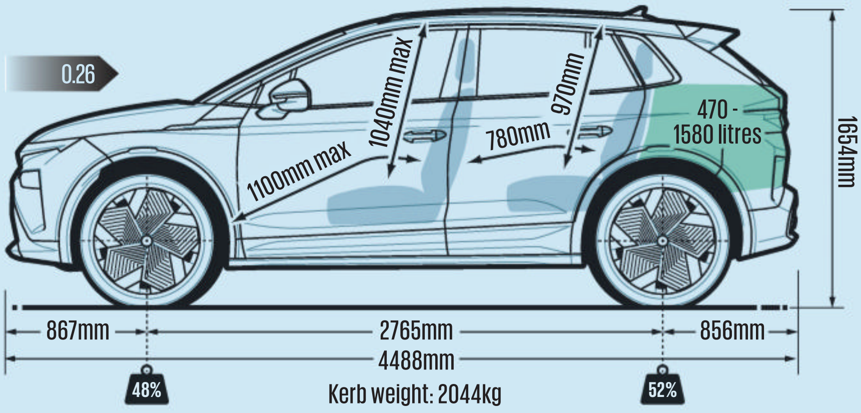
BOOT Length 850-1700mm, width 970-1300mm, height 510-760mm. Roomy load area has oddment trays and a clever adjustable-height parcel shelf.

SKODA
KY25 OUX

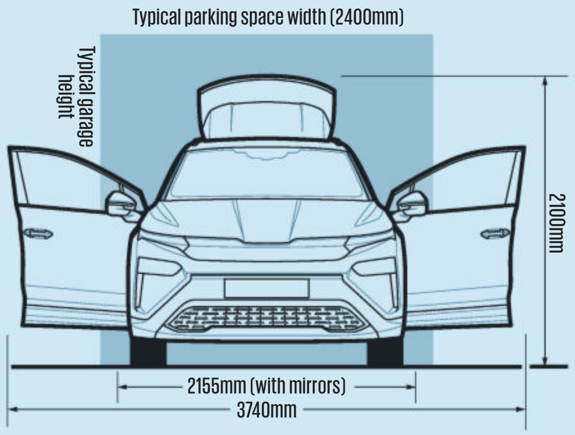
"It's rare for a mid-range Skoda to feel as assertive as this"

TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS


0.26
1040mm max
970mm
470 - 1580 litres
1100mm max
780mm
1654mm
867mm
2765mm
856mm
4488mm
48%
Kerb weight: 2044kg
52%

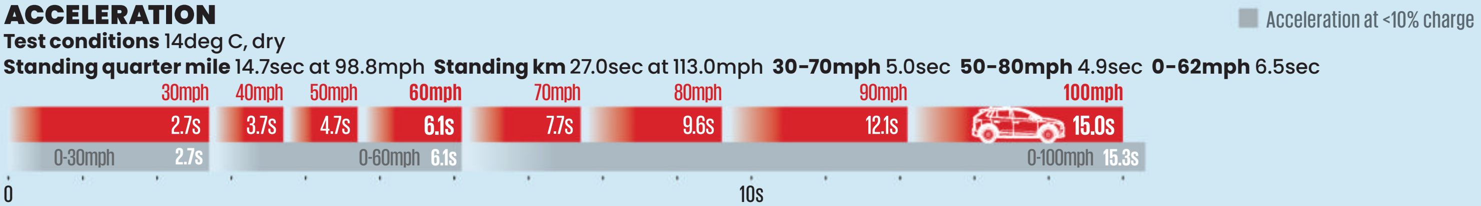
PARKING


Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2100mm
2155mm (with mirrors)
3740mm

ACCELERATION

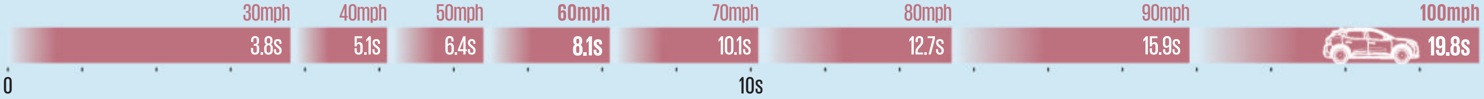
Test conditions 14deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 14.7sec at 98.8mph **Standing km** 27.0sec at 113.0mph **30-70mph** 5.0sec **50-80mph** 4.9sec **0-62mph** 6.5sec



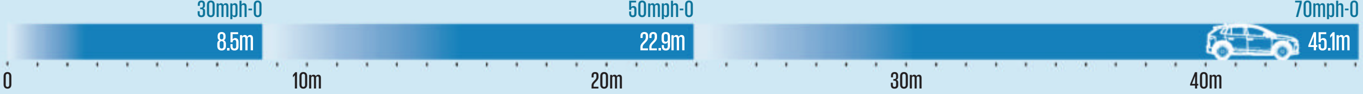
Renault Scenic E-Tech Long Range Iconic (2024, 16deg C, dry)

Standing quarter mile 16.4sec at 91.8mph **Standing km** 29.4sec at 107.8mph **30-70mph** 6.3sec **50-80mph** 6.3sec

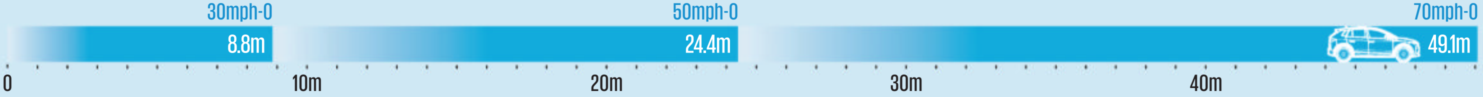


BRAKING

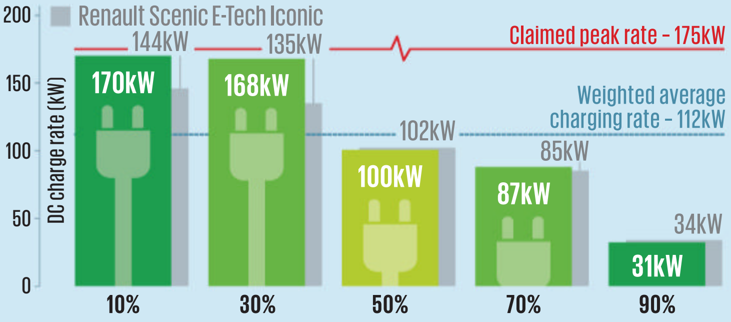
Dry 60-0mph 2.51sec



Wet 60-0mph 2.69sec

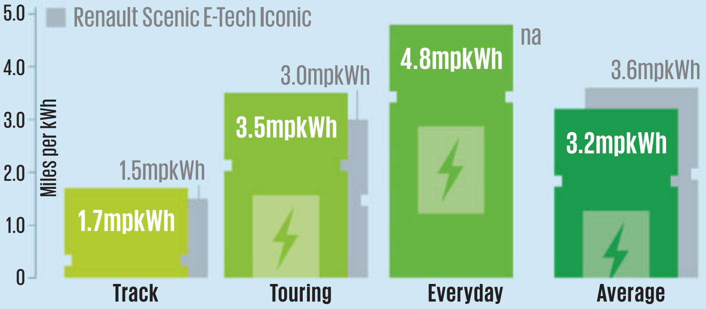


RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

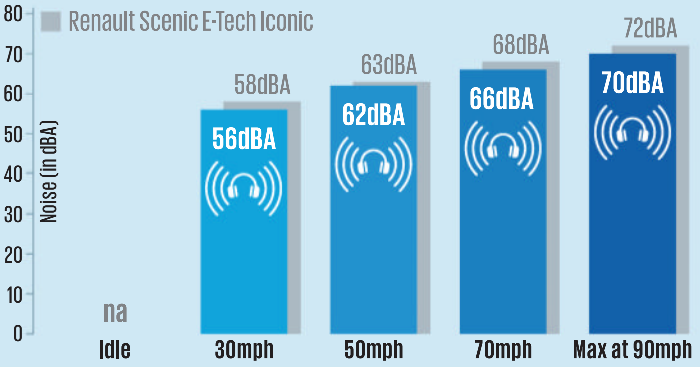


RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 360 miles, 4.1mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 246/270/370 miles (average/touring/everyday)

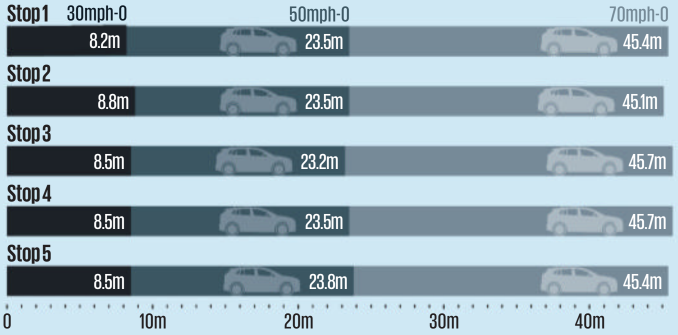


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: 0.0m



PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission. For information on the Elroq, contact Skoda UK Customer Services, PO Box 9004, Leeds, LS1 9WA (0333 003 7504, skoda.co.uk).

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

SKODA ELROQ 85 EDITION

On-the-road price £38,650
Price as tested £40,230
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £18,675
Contract hire £310 pcm (£1862 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles, excluding VAT)
Typical PCP £391 pcm (£8573 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Insurance group 32

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard 13in touchscreen multimedia with Skoda Connect networking, cooled wireless smartphone charging pad, digital instruments, dual-zone climate control, LED headlights, predictive adaptive cruise control, Loft interior design selection
Optional Race Blue metallic paint £680, Driver Package (DCC adaptive damping) £650, Transport Package (variable boot floor and load bay elements) £250
Also available Plus Package (LED matrix headlights, powered tailgate) £1950, Advanced Package (electric seats, head-up display, premium audio) £4150, heat pump £1000

MOTOR & BATTERY

Installation Rear, transverse, RWD
Type Separately excited synchronous motor
Power 282bhp
Torque 402lb ft
Battery type NMC
Capacity 82/77kWh (total/usable)
Voltage 400V
Power to weight 138bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 197lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear
Reduction/final drive ratio 7.9:1
mph per 1000rpm 10.9
Motor rpm at 70/80mph 6403/7318

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel monocoque
Weight/as tested 2044kg/2085kg
Weight distribution (f/r) 48%/52%
Drag coefficient 0.26
Wheels 8.0Jx19in
Tyres 235/55 R19 101T (f), 255/50 R19 103T (r), Kumho Ecsta PS71 EV
Spare None (mobility foam)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.5 turns lock to lock; 10.8m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 358mm ventilated discs, two-piston calipers **Rear** 280mm drums **Handbrake type** Electronic, switch (centre console)

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO_2 0g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £13/£26

VERDICT

Another well-rounded, class-topping EV from Skoda

★★★★½

Four years ago, the comfortable, reasonably priced Enyaq emerged as our pick of the first wave of VW Group electric SUVs. But what Skoda has achieved now with the Elroq, itself hardly any more flashy than its sibling, might be even more impressive.

This car represents a shift in design philosophy – which we like. It is, in its way, as spacious and versatile as any compact SUV in its class and has plenty of value-adding practical features.

Its strength of performance is clear, yet there is no compromise on efficiency, range, drivability or ride comfort. It's intuitive and pleasant both to drive and to interact with, with a cabin whose ambience has been lifted above the workaday, without detracting from its unpretentious character.

Is this car exciting or fun to drive? Not really. But it misses very little else.

TESTERS' NOTES

MATT SAUNDERS
A net on the reverse of the boot hatchback to retain your charging cable and keep it accessible is such a simple idea but, yet again, Skoda gets there first. Does it have an R&D department for these things, I wonder?

ILLYA VERPRAET
As the Elroq proves, rear-engined EVs seemingly need to be heavier than their front-engined counterparts (presumably for comparable crash performance), yet that doesn't seem to hurt cruising efficiency or boot space on this one. Interesting.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Lower prices in line with new Asian brands.
- Give us an 85 SE L model. Maximum range and efficiency, with a simple spec.
- Superbs and Kodiaqs get physical heater controls. Why not here?

RANKING RIVALS

	1 SKODA ELROQ 85 EDITION	2 **RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH LONG RANGE TECHNO**	3 **KIA EV3 81.4KWH GT LINE**	4 **VAUXHALL GRANDLAND ELECTRIC GS**	5 **HYUNDAI KONA ELECTRIC N-LINE**	**MG S5 EV EXTENDED RANGE**
		Handsome, roomy and great value on PCP, though Elroq is more efficient.	Standout styling, less so to drive. Strong for space, range, ease of use. A bit pricey on finance.	Lots of EV for the money, though not so much range. A bit forgettable to drive.	Comfy and refined, and distinctive to behold. Now lacks some range for the price, however.	MG 4's SUV sibling car is coming soon and should be very competitive across the board.
		★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★½☆	★★★½☆	
Price		£40,995	£39,495	£38,495	£40,395	£39,000 (est)
Power, torque		215bhp, 221lb ft	201bhp, 209lb ft	210bhp, 254lb ft	215bhp, 188lb ft	241bhp, 258lb ft
0-62mph, top speed		7.9sec, 106mph	7.9sec, 105mph	9.0sec, 105mph	7.8sec, 107mph	7.0sec, 110mph (est)
Range, economy		379 miles, 3.6mpkWh	367 miles, 4.1mpkWh	324 miles, 3.7mpkWh	282 miles, 3.7mpkWh	350 miles, 4.0 (est)

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5734**

MERCEDES E-CLASS

Is this diesel estate throwback now a heart-over-head proposition?

With the rise and rise of the SUV, and the concurrent reputational slide of diesel, the oil-fired family wagon has been an endangered species for some time. In the next few years it may disappear for good, and this is particularly true for versions with torque-rich six-cylinder engines.

In fact we're already in a last-car-standing scenario, because BMW has, at least in the UK, shunned diesel entirely for the latest raft of 3 and 5 Series models, including the big-booted Touring variants. Aside from the quirky S6 Avant (get it while it's still here), Audi is also down to only four-piston offerings for TDI derivatives of the A4 and A6 Avant – erstwhile stalwarts of the big-capacity diesel scene.

All of which makes the subject of this road test an interesting, unusual and, for readers who want maximum autonomy and effortless pace and opulence, alluring one. Is the Mercedes E450d Estate the only car you'll ever need? Let's find out.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★⯪

PROS Chassis isn't short of the latest tech; powerful diesel motor

CONS Undeniably heavy, though still reasonable compared with SUVs

The E-Class needs no introduction, with roots traceable back to 1947 in the Mercedes family tree. The model has a history of diesel power too: the W115 – an antecedent of the modern E-Class – first acquired a 'D' on its bootlid in 1968 and, not long after, an inline five joined the fray. The five-pot 250D, latterly the 300D, was the diesel range-topper throughout the 1970s and '80s. It was during this time that Mercedes also began to offer an estate body.

For a time, anybody who had to have the most potent diesel E-Class was given V6 power, but in 2017 Mercedes reverted to its old preferred arrangement and the OM656 straight-six turbo diesel was born. The E450d tested here has an evolution of that motor, with mild-hybrid assistance in the form of a 48V integrated starter-generator and an electrically spooled turbo (similar tech to that of the Porsche 911 GTS T-Hybrid road tested in the 5 March issue). Totals of 367bhp and 553lb ft, the latter arriving at barely above tickover, give the E450d undeniable Q-car appeal – even more so if you opt for the unassuming estate, rather than the smart saloon. That torque figure, by the way, matches what you will get from the 4.4-litre V8 in the latest BMW M5 – and the Touring version.

It's also worth noting that the E450d is now the only E-Class with more than four cylinders, at least in terms of the mainline models. You can have an E200 (four-pot petrol) or the E300e (its PHEV sibling), and the E220d and E300de play a similar

MODEL TESTED

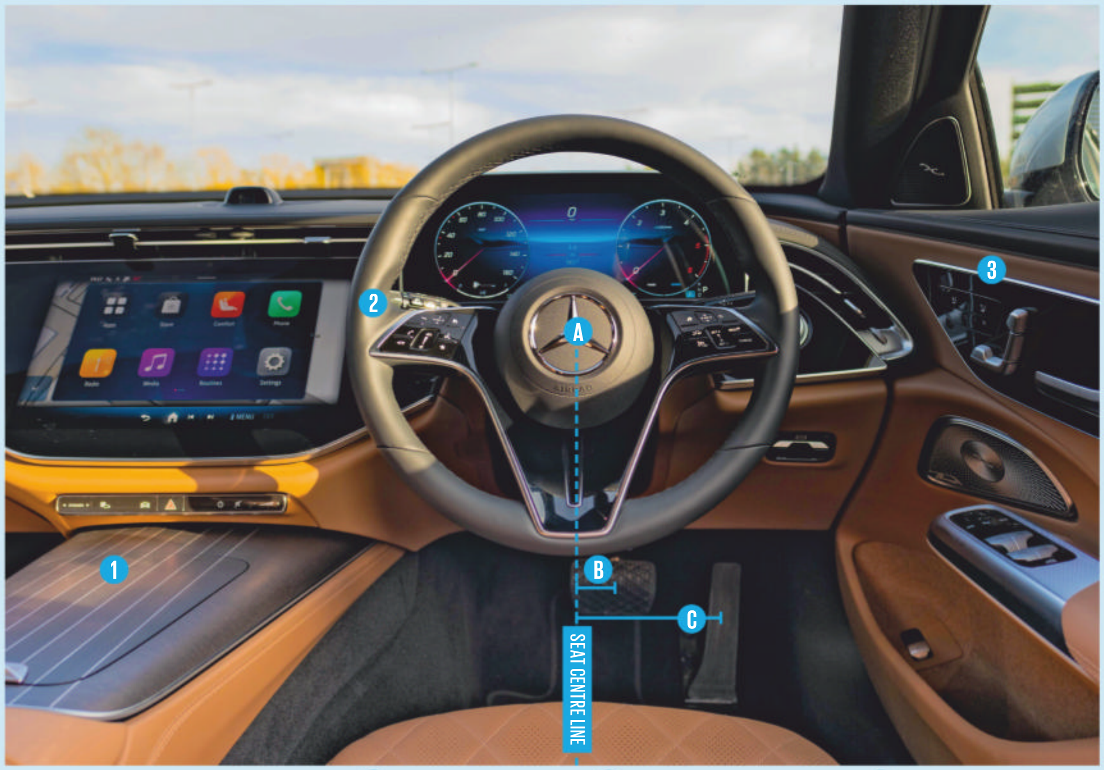
MERCEDES-BENZ E450D ESTATE EXCLUSIVE PREMIUM PLUS

Price £88,945
Power 367bhp at 4000rpm
Torque 553lb ft at 1350-2800rpm
0-60mph 4.9sec
30-70mph 4.3sec
Top speed 155mph (claimed)
Average economy 34.9mpg
Touring economy 46.1mpg
CO_2 emissions 171g/km
70-0mph 49.4m (3deg C, damp/frost)

① Cubby in the central tunnel opens to reveal two USB-C ports, cupholders and wireless charging pad. When closed it's very smart indeed, especially in rich maple.

② AMG Line cars get a perforated steering wheel with control-laden split horizontal spokes. Exclusive Premium Plus trim brings a less racy but comfier rim. Less cluttered too.

③ Sculpted door cards are rather lovely and exemplify the organic curvature of the E-Class's broad, enveloping cabin. Door-based controls are less impressive.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 50mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 120mm right. E-Class driving position has a comfort and maturity about it that many SUVs struggle to match.

double act for the diesel, but there is no six-cylinder petrol. Not, that is, until you get to the realm of AMG's E53 Hybrid 4Matic, with its 603bhp total output and six-figure asking price. You can also have the E53 in estate form, but the result isn't exactly subtle, and is thus unlikely, in our opinion, to be of interest as a petrol alternative for the would-be E450d shopper. Point being, if you today want a old-world six-cylinder E-Class, the E450d is it.

Downstream of the engine sits Mercedes' nine-speed 9G-Tronic Plus automatic gearbox, which defaults to a 45:55 torque distribution, front to rear, with the help of a multi-plate locking mechanism for the centre differential, which is built into the transmission casing. The system can if needed direct as much as 70% of torque to an axle, but unlike Mercedes' more recent 4Matic+ set-up (which can go into pure RWD mode) can't bias to a greater extent. There is also torque vectoring, though it is more what you might call a passive set-up, elicited with brake intervention rather than by the differential itself.

So the E450d has oodles of torque and four-wheel drive to make best use of it. As for suspension, you will find air springs not only at the back (standard on all E-Class Estates to allow for self-levelling) but also at the front, because the top-rung diesel E450d comes as standard with the £2500 Refinement Package, which brings air all round and, in the saloon, rear-axle steering as well. Note that neither the BMW 5 Series nor the Audi A6 can be had with air springs on both axles.

Mechanically the E450d is a comprehensive package, and while that doesn't come lightly, in the EV era this car's kerb weight doesn't seem outrageous. In basic trim, the saloon weighs 1900kg, which increases to 2065kg with estate bodywork. Our test car, in all-bells-and-whistles Exclusive Premium Plus guise, trod the scales at 2167kg with its 73-litre tank brimmed. It's far from shameful – the Audi RS6 Avant GT we tested recently carried a V8, yes, but it also had plenty of composite panels and yet only undercut the Mercedes by 24kg. Note also the E450d is 4.9m long.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Material lavishness; driving position; vast carrying capacity
CONS Some switchgear feels low-rent; Hyperscreen is an overload

Our 2024 road test of the E220d went into detail on the E-Class cabin and we won't repeat ourselves much here. Suffice to say build quality seems to be on an upward trajectory at Mercedes after many years in the doldrums, though the play in some of the switchgear is still a weak spot.

Elsewhere, the space offers plenty of variety and visual interest without going so far as to feel cluttered and chintzy. It's a mature space with plenty of elegant shapes, though we probably wouldn't specify the Hyperscreen option, which sees the entire dash inlaid with a glass front and brings an additional touchscreen display for the passenger. Far nicer to have the material slathered over the transmission tunnel – in this case maple neatly inlaid with aluminium – spread across the dashboard too.

Of course, one opts for the estate for the space it offers, and the latest E-Class doesn't disappoint. Rear head room is up 40mm on the saloon, which itself is hardly cramped, and the boot is vast. ▸

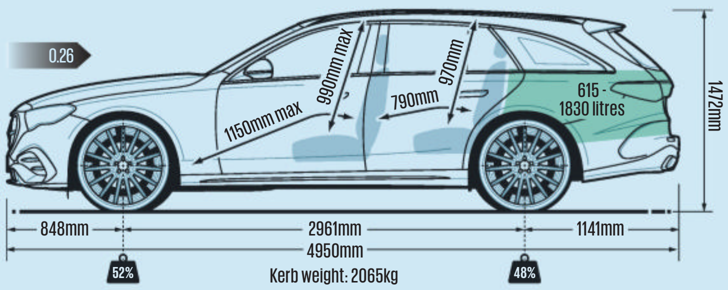
■ Test car wears glitzy 21in rims but it's possible to lean into the E450d's understated appeal (and maximise sidewall height) with 19s. The car rides superbly whichever you have.

■ OM656 diesel straight six has been around since 2017, when it made its debut in the S-Class. Today it's a mild hybrid and makes a stonking 553lb ft barely beyond tickover.

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

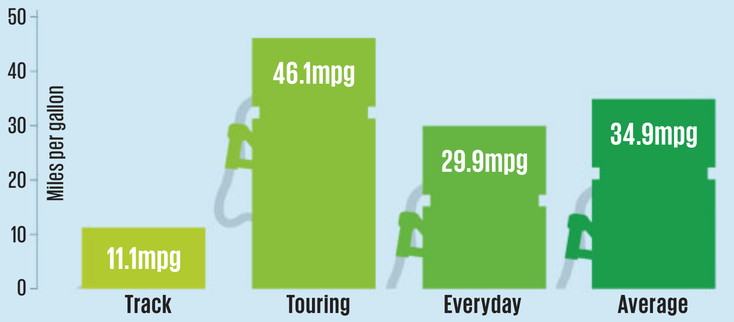
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS



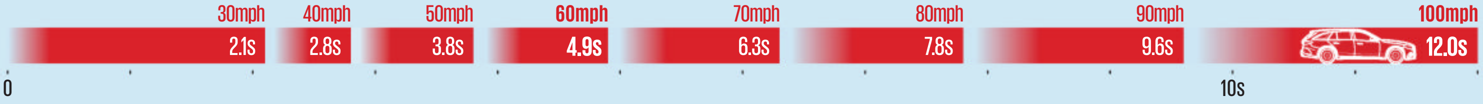
RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 42.8-44.8mpg (combined) **Test range** 560/740/480 miles (average/touring/everyday)

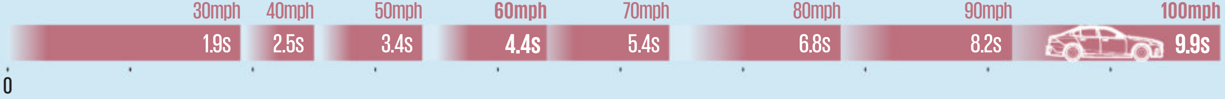


ACCELERATION

Test conditions 3deg C, damp/frost
Standing quarter mile 13.5sec at 106.4mph **Standing km** na **30-70mph** 4.3sec **30-70mph in fourth** 4.2sec **50-80mph** 5.0sec **0-62mph** 5.2sec

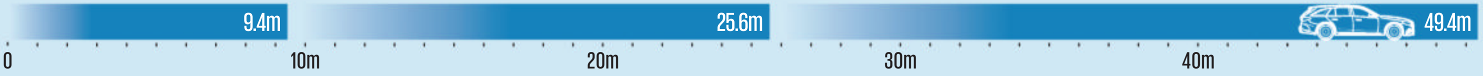


BMW 550e xDrive M Sport Pro (2024, 12deg C, dry)
Standing quarter mile 12.7sec at 113.5mph **Standing km** 22.9sec at 145.3mph **30-70mph** 3.5sec **30-70mph in fourth** 6.1sec **50-80mph** 3.4sec

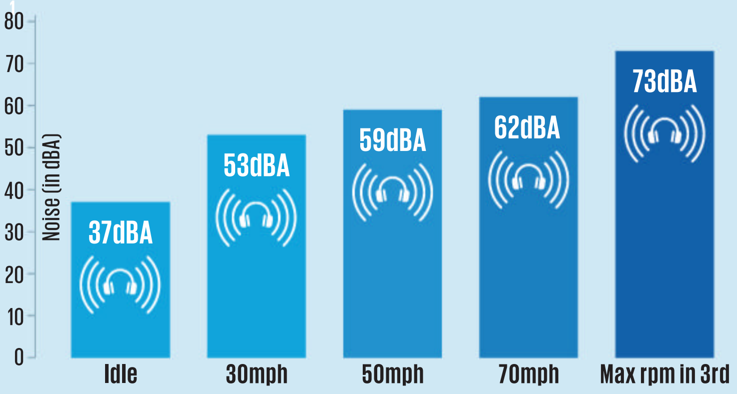


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.75sec



CABIN NOISE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

MERCEDES-BENZ E450D ESTATE EXCLUSIVE PREMIUM PLUS

On-the-road price £88,945
Price as tested £89,640
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £35,850
Insurance group 50

ENGINE

Installation Front, longitudinal, 4WD
Type 6 cyls in line, 2989cc, turbocharged, diesel, plus 48V ISG
Power 367bhp at 4000rpm
Torque 553lb ft at 1350-2800rpm
Redline 4500rpm
Specific output 123bhp per litre
Power to weight 178bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 268lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 9-spd automatic
rpm in top gear at 70/80mph 1361/1555

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel and aluminium monocoque
Weight/as tested 2065kg/2167kg
Wheels 8.5Jx21in (f), 9.5Jx21in (r)
Tyres 245/35 R21 (f), 275/30 R21 (r), Continental EcoContact 6Q

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front and rear Multi-link, air springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.3 turns lock to lock; 12.0m turning circle

For information on the E450d, contact Mercedes-Benz UK, Delaware Drive, Tongwell, Milton Keynes, MK15 8BA (00800 9777 7777, mercedes-benz.co.uk)

> "Its ability to waft along is close to S-Class levels"

PETER LIDDIARD

◀ PHEV versions are compromised due to the battery that sits under the floor, but in mild-hybrid E450d guise you get 615 litres extending to 1830 litres (versus 570 and 1700 litres in an ICE-powered 5 Series) when the second row of seats is dropped to give a flat, wide, heroically long load bay. Only Skoda's Superb Estate does better among new cars. We should, however, point out that the E-Class's seats-up capacity is a touch smaller than its forebear's. These days, the GLE does a little better.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★⯪

PROS Truly effortless pace; well-tuned gearbox; does it all frugally
CONS Diesel will never be as sweet on the ears as petrol

This straight-six diesel fires up smoothly then moves the E450d off the mark and up to cruising speed with almost blissful ease. Though something of an anachronism in this age, it is a wonderful motor, aided by 23bhp from the 48V ISG, and a finer any-day, any-task companion for the E-Class estate body you would hardly wish for. Gearshifts from the nine-speed auto are also superbly matched to the character of this engine, and while the shift strategy is very nicely devised, even were it not it would hardly matter, such is this motor's ability to easily drag 2.1 tonnes forward from seemingly any point in the rev range, in any gear.

The evidence of this engine's effectiveness at low crank speeds, rather than up near the 4500rpm redline, is seen in our recorded time for 30-70mph in fourth gear. At 4.2sec it is a tenth quicker than if you're in full kickdown. It is also, if you can believe it, two-tenths quicker than the time managed by the new AMG GT 63 super-coupé. Like we say, true Q-car appeal.

Just how much drivability is improved by the electric-spooling turbocharger is difficult to quantify, which, we suppose, speaks to the sensitive integration of the system. This powertrain certainly seems to waste little time in ramping up to its 553lb ft potential, though there remains a boostiness to the delivery in full-throttle scenarios, not that this should be regarded as a problem. Given the forces at play, this is a linear engine in the context of beefcake diesels, and is easy to modulate with your right foot.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★★⯪

PROS Truly silken long-wave gait; surprisingly accurate; composure
CONS Occasional low-speed shudders

The E450d estate, on its air springs, exhibits exactly the flavour of ride and handling balance you would want in a car like this. The ability of this chassis to waft along a motorway or a curving A-road, or to isolate you from the topological vagaries of a threadbare B-road, is excellent and close to S-Class levels. In our noise tests, the E450d estate also proved just as quiet as the recently updated Range Rover at a 70mph cruise, and was marginally quieter at 50mph. In short, there is no journey during which this old-school Mercedes won't prove relaxing, restorative company (even lane keeping assistance and road sign alerts are easy to switch off, and the E450d otherwise has few if any ADAS-related irritations).

The handling also proved a pleasant surprise. There's a neat balance here that isn't overtly nose-led. A composed accuracy also means slotting the suspension and driveline into Sport mode and splicing through a few good bends can be quietly satisfying, not to mention very effective in terms of trimming your journey time – this is a quick point-to-point car. The steering is key to this. It's largely devoid of granular feel but is expertly sped and weighted for this sort of application, making a large, heavy car very easy to place and even enjoy in the right moment.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Ultra-efficient given the pace and practicality; a rare breed
CONS Benefit-in-kind rate of 37%; considerable asking price for our test car; punishing residual values

The E-Class range kicks off with the E220d AMG Line, at £59k. The plug-in hybrid E300de is closer to £69k, and the E450d AMG Line Premium starts at £82k, rising to £89k for the Exclusive Premium Plus version tested here. At this level you get everything you could reasonably expect, including Burmester's '4D' sound system. In isolation it seems a high asking price, though a similarly equipped (and similarly powerful) Audi S6 Avant, with its V6 TDI, now costs closer to £92k. On the other hand, BMW's 550e xDrive Pro Sport Touring (a near-500bhp, six-cylinder PHEV that, like the E450d, rides beautifully) will set you back less than £82k but isn't such an adept big-mileage option.

In terms of economy, our car's recorded touring figure of 46.1mpg equals a generous motorway range of 740 miles, underscoring this car's continent-trotting raison d'être. Mind you, the OM656 is less frugal on slower routes – expect around 30mpg in everyday driving.

VERDICT

Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you'd ever need

★★★★⯪

It is entirely possible, if not likely, that once the current era of premium estate cars is put out to pasture, diesel power will be retired with them. If that is the case, the Mercedes E450d will stand as an exemplar of what made these cars such capable, effortless, characterful companions. The asking price is high, and never before has a diesel family wagon required would-be owners to think as much with their hearts as with their heads, but the rewards are many. A judiciously specced version surely ranks high among the cars most of us would happily buy and then keep forever.

RIVALS

1 **MERCEDES-BENZ E450D ESTATE**

2 **BMW ALPINA D3 S TOURING**
From £68,600
★★★★⯪

3 **BMW 550E TOURING**
From £78,885
★★★★☆

4 **AUDI S6 AVANT**
From £76,580
★★★★☆

ENGINEERING TO ENABLE

Designed & Engineered in Great Britain

4.9/5

Independent Service Rating based on 301 verified reviews

3-4
Seats + Wheelchair

Motability Scheme

from
£8,995
Advance Payment
1.5 TSI Petrol Auto 116PS

Brotherwood Goodlife
Volkswagen Caddy Life

Save £4,000
Off Retail Price ▶

Brotherwood C'arete
Ford Tourneo Connect

NEW | USED | HIRE

Small WAVs. Big Deals.

Spring Offers on compact Brotherwood® Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

Our compact VW Caddy Life and Ford Tourneo Connect feature market-leading design, with a difference you can feel

COMFORT
Our signature flat, level lowered floor for superior outward visibility

INCLUSION
Central wheelchair location directly next to the rear passenger

SAFETY
Simple restraint system for fast, easy loading and wheelchair securement

Request a brochure or FREE, no-obligation home demonstration at Brotherwood.com

FREEPHONE **0330 1747 544**

Offers end 31st March 2025.

BROTHERWOOD®
ENGINEERING TO ENABLE

40 Years 1985-2025

Commercial Vehicles

IntegratedPartner of Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles

Ford PRO Convertor

MATT SAUNDERS

Testing, testing

Saunders has seen the future and it looks something like this

This may well say more about my own lack of reflection on the subject than anything else, but the job of a road tester seems to me to be quite particular and the skills that it requires a little, shall we say, non-transferable.

I've always imagined that I personally would be ill-matched to the corporate culture of life as a modern automotive development engineer, quite aside from being woefully unqualified for the technical requirements. I wouldn't make it out of my first week.

I'm not talented or fit enough for a career in motorsport. Not diplomatic or patient enough to work in modern corporate communications either. Even among other media people, us car testing types are frequently accused of living life on Road Test Island (Iran's petrol prices, the Isle of Man's speed limits, a Kwik Fit on every corner, no internet and a legally enforceable limit on magazine publishing frequency of once a quarter).

Road testers' habits die hard, even in a truck in a quarry

> **"There was an art to his instruction: never did I feel I'd erred"**

The one other line of work that I might consider, it seems to me, is instruction. Not driving instruction of proper learner drivers reversing around corners and doing three-point turns, I hasten to add: advanced road or track driving tuition of the kind that a working life misspent driving a disproportionately powerful selection of cars on and in a diverse mix of circuits and environments might at least partly prepare one for.

Honestly, if only for a moment or two, I've thought about it (we all have bad days, after all). The most recent occasion was on the UK press launch of a pick-up truck that involved some off-roading in a purpose-built demonstration venue. I was paired with a lovely chap who'd had his own rally team and was therefore well used to challenges far more serious than the muddy tracks we were dealing with. So his first trick was in effortlessly and instantly putting me at ease before we'd even turned a wheel.

As we went around, we simply talked cars. And planes, and engines, and electric motors – and, very occasionally, he told me to stop and select low range, hold onto a gear, avoid a rut, use more power (or indeed less) or wiggle the steering wheel a bit to help dig us out of a hole.

There was an art to what he did, because never did I feel like I was being lectured or dictated to, that I'd erred or offended or displayed any inability to follow simple instructions (which, at some point, I no doubt did). This gent just allowed me to concentrate on and enjoy what I was doing, didn't put himself in the way and gave me the odd gentle prompt when I needed it.

Something similar happened on the press launch of the Land Rover Defender Octa earlier this year. Land Rover has a lot of practice when it comes to running demonstration drives suited to showing off the capabilities of its vehicles, and this one took in rock-crawling, rally stage-like handling testing and sand-duning.

I wasn't quite a novice at any of it but, as I habitually do, I went at it with nothing to prove, curious about what I could learn and treating the fellow next to me like a fellow human being whom I wouldn't want to make uncomfortable in any case. Apparently my sand driving in particular showed at least some natural aptitude – which is just another way of saying that an expert instructor finds a way to make you feel good about what you're doing.

Could I do it? Perhaps – but I reckon I'd prefer off-road enthusiasts to millionaire customer prospects and sand dunes to circuits. And I'm in no hurry to give up this lark just yet.

Mach Seven

Low-flying highs await **MATT PRIOR** as he drives a rare £80,000 Caterham from Dartford to Mach Valley in Wales

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

I don't have accurate statistics because none will exist, but bear with. I think anecdotally it's acknowledged that more than a few pilots subsequently become Caterham drivers, and/or that flying is something many Caterham owners turn to. There's something that unites the activities: mechanical interaction, guiding something analogue, feeling the elements, managing mild perils. The Seven club magazine is even called Lowflying.

Where better, then, to take a new Caterham than to what has sort of become the glamorous home of low flying in the UK: a set of valleys in Wales colloquially known as the Mach Loop, named after the nearby town of Machynlleth, where British military flyers and their friends practise screeching between the hills.

If this sounds to you like an excuse for machine-mad photographer Jack Harrison and me to stand on a windswept mountainside in the hope of seeing an F-22 scream just a few hundred feet past us then, well… rumbled, I suppose.

But what better Caterham to get there in than this one? It's a CSR, which was a new dawn for the Kent firm when it first appeared 20 years ago. Wider than a standard Seven, it was a bigger, smoother-riding, more capable and plusher Seven, with a marginally more comfortable ▶

◂ interior. Faster and yet at the same time more relaxed. Better for zooming through the valleys than the harsher-riding Caterhams of old.

I can't remember the last time I saw one. And if you're a Caterham fetishist like me, you'll know one if you see it. A standard Caterham Seven, by which I mean one from the regular range (not the kei car-compliant 170), is 3180mm long by 1470mm wide. You can optionally 'large-chassis' a regular Seven for more room, which takes it out to the size of this CSR, 3360mm long by 1700mm wide, but the CSR has details that make it look different again.

It's Caterham-esque but somehow not quite so. It has more aerodynamic (these things are relative) front wings and there are more holes in it to let air in and out. And where are the front springs? They're inboard, driven by pushrods, and next to those wings (carbonfibre on this test car) are aerodynamically profiled front wishbones.

Trying to enhance the aero of a Seven is like fitting secondary glazing to one part of Blenheim Palace and hoping it will reduce the heating bills, but I suppose it all helps a little.

There's more. At the back, although you can't see it, it has fully independent double-wishbone suspension rather than the trad Seven's de Dion rear end. The advantage this suspension gives ride quality is marked, and it helps improve grip and traction too. Not that even this will be able to do much about Wales in winter, given the CSR is on Toyo Proxes R888R tyres – hardly renowned for their performance in such conditions.

Ultimately, though – and this is why you so rarely spot a CSR – British Caterham buyers preferred their Sevens in the more traditional and basic 'Series 3' form, without the posher insides and funky outsides. The CSR has continued to be available in mainland Europe because it passes regulations other Sevens never could, but has long since been dropped from the range here.

Until now, just as its time is up. The CSR is going off sale completely and, to mark the demise, Caterham is building a 20-off CSR Twenty edition, for sale in the UK only.

When the CSR first arrived, power came from a 260bhp 2.3-litre Ford engine breathed on by Cosworth. Owing to more limited engine availability today, it houses a 210bhp and 150lb ft 2.0-litre Ford Duratec unit, which drives through a five-speed Mazda MX-5 gearbox. A limited-slip differential is optional but not fitted to our test car because it tends to whine a bit, and because Caterham sees this as a (slightly) more rounded proposition, it went with the quieter option.

The CSR comes factory-built only, by the way – with no self-build alternative. The CSR was always one of the more expensive Sevens but these final-edition CSRs cost – wait for it – from £79,995, more than twice the CSR's price when it was first launched.

I do wonder if this is Caterham testing the water of what it can do with the range. Over the past few years, it hasn't been a given that the company makes profits and, with a 170 available from £29,490 (self-build), perhaps Caterham has been thinking some models are too affordable. Plus this is a bit of history.

Caterham makes noises about the plushness of the CSR Twenty's interior – it has some new materials, more artfully applied, but like the aerodynamics these things are relative. It is still a Seven interior, which means snug and basic.

The seats are pleasingly softly finished, there are carpets and the centre console has a cushiony soft leather finish, with Alcantara highlights around and a numbered plaque. There's a satin-finish carbon dashboard too.

I find it easy to get comfortable in any Seven but this big-bodied version exists to accommodate the larger driver. If you're tall or wide, it's the variant for you. In fact, there's so much room in the pedal box that with my size-eight feet and small trainers, the pedals are too far apart for easy heel-and-toeing.

The steering wheel is a non-adjustable leather Momo thing, the gearshift throw is perhaps the shortest in production, and the simple dials and toggle switches are pifflingly easy to acquaint yourself with. There's a heater and a 12V socket, and even though the suspension design takes up more room than older systems, there's still a boot, mohair-lined. Plus a roof.

I don't imagine anybody will think that the hood itself is plush. Magazines were complaining about the popper fastenings when I was a kid and the Seven still uses them now.

Today, a Seven's hood pulls tighter than ones of old and keeps you mercifully dry too, but it's a bind to put up and down. Note also that the mirrors are attached to the doors and you can't adjust them when you're inside the car. Four-point harnesses are standard, with all the safety but faffing they entail.

Still, there's a heated windscreen to keep misting at bay and you can reach all of the ▸

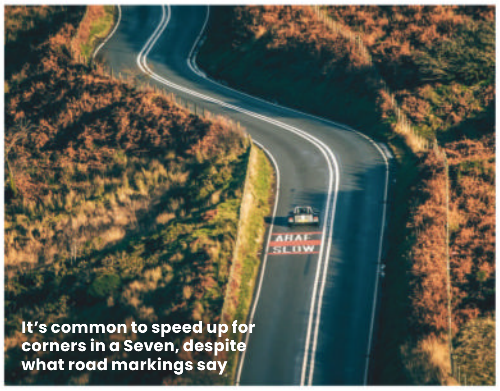
"If you've never driven a Seven, you'll be blown away by its immediacy"

Clear dials, simple toggles and a Momo wheel: just what a keen driver needs

£58,490 After the CSR, the next most expensive Seven is now the 620, which starts from under £60k. It's possible – and advisable – to get busy with the options, though.

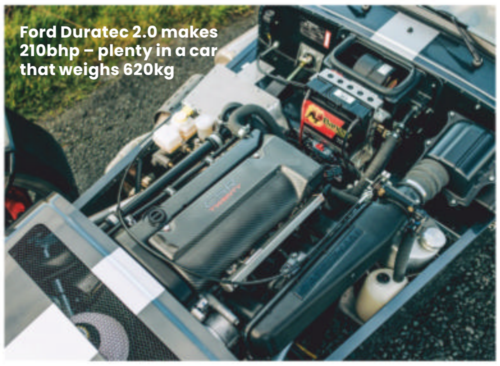
Prior primes the phone's sat-nav for more back road fun; 12V socket is handy

CSR has aero refinements; run-out Twenty models are all built by the factory



It's common to speed up for corners in a Seven, despite what road markings say

Hood remains fiddly, in true Seven tradition, but it's taut and watertight



Ford Duratec 2.0 makes 210bhp – plenty in a car that weighs 620kg

CSR
TWENTY
CATERHAM
CATERHAM

Four-point harnesses can be a faff but make sense in a car like this

“The road isn’t going to dry today and the Seven can and will break traction”

◂ other windows with a cloth to demist those, so it's not an unpleasant drive from Caterham's lovely new factory at Dartford towards my overnight halt in mid-west England, even on a rainy winter's evening. But because you sit so low, you'll swear that anything taller than a Nissan Qashqai has its main beams on, given how dazzling headlights are in the mirrors. By the time I reach my overnight base, I've decided I'd fit tinted film over them if the car were mine.

The morning is bright and, because days like this are my favourite reason to get out of bed, so is my mood. There's no guarantee of seeing aircraft in the Mach Loop. You just turn up at a lay-by on the A487, walk up a hill, and hope.

I don't mind either way. The drive over is pretty much all good back roads. This CSR's 2.0-litre engine tune is the same as the 420 model's and is a combo that hasn't been offered in the CSR chassis before. Continental CSRs were previously running with the 485 model's higher-revving 225bhp engine.

But if you think that having only 210bhp (at 7600rpm) or 150lb ft (at 6300rpm) is a downgrade, remember this is a car that still weighs only 620kg and it has one of the slickest, sharpest manual gearshifts in production. Those power and torque figures arrive at high revs, so you need to work the gears, whereupon it's amazingly urgent. At low revs it's still responsive and linear, but at one point I leave it in fourth to overtake a truck and a few seconds later realise I should have picked third.

But even with a clear sky (and the roof down), the road isn't going to dry today and, in these conditions, it doesn't pay to be too liberal with the throttle because the Seven can and will break traction.

We were extremely complimentary about the ride of the CSR when it first arrived in the mid-2000s and age hasn't wearied it. It rolls with an absorbance denied other Sevens, though I think the gap is closer than it used to be.

The compliance doesn't bring with it a paucity of body control. The CSR is bigger than a regular Seven but the sprung masses are still light, so easily controlled. And while it's bigger and arguably less pure than the smaller Sevens, the Caterham character is still very much intact. If you'd never driven a Seven, you'd be blown away by the lightness and immediacy of a CSR.

"Piss off Biggles"

Low flying isn't universally loved. It's loud and scares animals. While it's accepted that it's essential training, a farmer did once paint this phrase on a barn roof.

How much does an F-15 weigh? The internet says 14,300kg, quite a lot more than a Seven, though it seems to impact its manoeuvrability and speed very little. Jack and I haven't even finished climbing the muddy, slippery slope when one enters from left of stage. So close, barely higher than us, vortices trailing from the wingtips. In a moment it has passed, heading down towards Llyn Mwyngil (Tal-y-llyn Lake), before spearing left and out of view.

A road almost follows the route out of the valley, so after watching for a while (a prop-driven Texan T1 trainer and a Phenom T1 jet pass: we are having a good day), we decide to take it too. Small trainers on, teacup stowed in walking boots, I'm no more than half a mile down the road when an A400M cargo plane appears directly overhead, seen before heard, and arcs its way gently into the distance. I'm not pretending a Seven is anything like real low flying. But as a cosplay alternative, for kidding yourself there's an affinity, these are the roads, and this is the car, to do it. 🅰

Normally, you see the front springs on a Seven but the CSR's are inboard

There's no guarantee of seeing fighter jets but they're not uncommon

F-15 pierces through the valley low enough to knock Prior's beanie off

CSR has a heater – not a given in a Seven – but hot tea is still welcome

CATERHAM SEVEN CSR TWENTY

Price £79,995
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1999cc, petrol
Power 210bhp at 7600rpm
Torque 150lb ft at 6300rpm
Gearbox 5-spd manual, RWD
Kerb weight 620kg
0-62mph 3.9sec
Top speed 136mph
Economy 35mpg (est)
CO_2 na

Let’s go round again

Most people barely even have an opinion about roundabouts – but some just can’t get enough of them, discovers **JOHN EVANS**

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

Surely, if anyone knows a dull car when he sees one, Kevin Beresford does. That’s why I’ve asked the creator of those tedious but inexplicably popular wall calendars ‘Car Parks of the UK’ and ‘Motability Scooter Riders of Benidorm’ to consider another: ‘Dull Cars of Redditch’, a potential companion calendar to his recently launched ‘Roadworks of Redditch’, the relevance of the place being only that he lives there.

So it is that I find myself standing in a car park in the Worcestershire town with the Lord of the Rings – so called on account of his presidency of the UK Roundabout Appreciation Society (UKRAS) and his 12 calendars so far dedicated to the UK’s greatest gyratory traffic systems – as he considers its assortment of dull cars, earnestly deciding which is the dullest.

“That one,” he says, pointing at a grey city car. It’s a Suzuki Wagon R+. You and I may know why this early-2000s box is not as dull as he imagines (indeed, Autocar described it as “the UK’s best-kept secret” at the time), but since he was once invited to be deputy assistant vice-president of no less an organisation than America’s Dull Men’s Club, I have little choice but to agree.

“It’s the ‘R’ that makes it,” he explains. “If it stands for ‘racing’, it’s being ironic, which is the defining quality of the best dullest things. The Wagon is box-like and grey and it says ‘R’. Ergo it’s Redditch’s dullest car.”

In fact, the ‘R’ stands for ‘revolution’ and ‘relaxation’, I inform him, but he isn’t to be discouraged: “It might do, but most people will think it stands for ‘racing’. I don’t imagine Suzuki would have been too eager to correct that impression. What car maker doesn’t want to be associated with motorsport?”

He has a point, so Redditch’s dullest car the Wagon R+ is.

Beresford is fresh from advising on an episode of new Discovery+ show James May & The Dull Men’s Club. In it, the former Autocar staffer (and former Top Gear presenter) attempts to drive across Milton Keynes without stopping – a feat made easier by the town’s many roundabouts.

Beresford’s association with roundabouts dates back to 2003, when, as the manager of a small printing firm in Redditch, he needed a theme for the following year’s calendar and, with help from staff, came up with ‘Roundabouts of Redditch’. TV’s Graham Norton got wind of the new calendar and featured it on his show. Within weeks, 100,000 copies had been sold around the world. It spawned other calendars, including ‘Best of British Roundabouts’ and ‘Roundabouts of the World’, plus books devoted to them – one of which Beresford now hands me, autographed by no less a figure than Sharon Osbourne.

Nowadays, he and fellow members of UKRAS – usually six of them – meet twice a month to talk about roundabouts.

Clocking my alarmed expression, he explains: “Artists have always been fascinated by the mundane. Think Andy Warhol and Campbell’s Soup Cans, Tracey Emin and My Bed… There’s nothing more expressive than a roundabout: it’s English in its good manners, with people giving way to each other, whereas a set of traffic lights is fascist in its demands that you stop and go only when it allows you to.

“Roundabouts also boost your spirits on a tedious journey. I’ve seen them with statues, trains, planes and even a cricket pitch [Basin Reserve in Wellington, New Zealand, if you’re interested] on them. London’s Marble Arch and Paris’s Arc de Triomphe are both in roundabouts.”

At this rate, Beresford is at risk of a seventh member joining his bi-monthly UKRAS sessions – right up until he lapses into jargon: “We call a

UKRAS's hero is the Transport Research Laboratory's Frank Blackmore, inventor of the mini roundabout and creator of the offside priority rule.

Roundabout royalty

Fancy going for a spin? Visit these favourite destinations of UKRAS president Kevin Beresford.

BRICK SHIP ROUNDABOUT, GIRVAN
Proving that a roundabout is a blank canvas for an artist is this brick model of a trawler, representing the town's fishing industry.

FLYING SAUCER ROUNDABOUT, BLACKPOOL
Anything can go on a roundabout – even whirling UFOs with aliens inside them. Sadly, the local council has dismantled them.

HOLGATE MILL ROUNDABOUT, YORK
Yes, it has a working windmill, producing flour.

DUCK POND ROUNDABOUT, OTFORD
The locals call the grand duck house in the centre Duckingham Palace.

MAGIC ROUNDABOUT, SWINDON
The "white-knuckle ride of all roundabouts, full of testosterone" is a popular day trip for members.

Roundabout aficionados don't need road closures or a drift car to get their fix

Car Parks of the U.K.
2025 calendar
Best of British
ROUNDABOUTS
2025 calendar
ROAD AHEAD CLOSED
ROADWORKS of REDDITCH
Back for another 2nd great year!
Mobility Scooter Riders of BENIDORM
2025 calendar
FRAGILE

Want cool cars on your calendar? The wonders of nature? Or perhaps this?

roundabout with a flower bed on it a Titchmarsh and one with a dwarf wall a brick ringer."

The roundabout we subsequently photograph him on has both, making it a Titchmarsh brick ringer – a condition no one would want.

Away from roundabouts, Beresford's calendar 'Roadworks of Redditch' is back for a second year.

"I like to see the positive in something negative and roadworks are not only necessary but also put people to work, earning a wage," he explains.

Another popular calendar is 'Car Parks of the UK' – an idea inspired by a job that Beresford did for the AA in 2006, when the motoring organisation commissioned him to travel the length of the UK for a book celebrating them.

In 2022, his Car Park Appreciation Society named Trinity Street Car Park in Digbeth its Car Park of the Year, describing it as "charismatic" and praising its entrance, which is constructed from bales of crushed car parts.

However, it's roundabouts that most attract Beresford, he reassures me: "In his book In the South Seas, Robert Louis Stevenson writes: 'Few men who come to the islands leave them… No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor.' I like to think he was talking about roundabouts." A

> *"A roundabout is English in its good manners, whereas a set of traffic lights is fascist in its demands"*

This Suzuki is Redditch's dullest car, 'Lord of the Rings' Beresford (left) tells Evans

“It’s not win-win. Somebody’s gonna lose”

Volvo boss Jim Rowan says car makers are in a “Darwinian event” and only the strongest will survive. He tells **MARK TISSHAW** why Volvo will be one of them

“If you’re looking for mental stimulation and sleepless nights, then come and join the industry,” says Volvo Cars CEO Jim Rowan, who did just that three years ago this month when he moved to the automotive world from the tech sector.

Compared with other car company CEOs, he speaks in a way that makes him still seem like an outsider – or perhaps an outlier – because the way Volvo talks so openly and extensively about software stacks, computer chips and processing power remains unique among legacy car manufacturers.

Yet Rowan believes this is where the game is now at for the automotive industry and he cannot comprehend how far behind rivals seem to be in the way they present themselves and talk about electric cars as if they’re a new thing, especially when their companies’ very survival is at stake.

“I’m not an automotive guy. I come from the tech sector and I’m absolutely flabbergasted by the amount of people that still talk about electrification, as if that’s the big thing,” he says. “We know about batteries. We know about embedding the modules. We know about even silicon carbide, which was a big story all of a sudden, but that’s not a new technology. We know about power electronics and so on.”

Instead, says Rowan, the four key things for the automotive industry now are “software, silicon, connectivity and data” – and Volvo is advanced in its development of all of them. But far from this being an attempt by Volvo to reposition itself as a tech company, this tech push is at its core about doubling down on safety and ensuring its cars continue to get ever safer and more lives are saved.

“When I say software, I mean full-stack software,” he says. “You need to be able to write from layer one of the silicon all the way up to the application layer of the car in order to control it properly. There are three companies in the world that have managed to do that: Tesla, Rivian and Volvo. There’s a lot of good car companies but none of them have figured it out. It’s a big deal – and freaking hard to get this done. But we’ve stuck at it.”

This ‘Superset’ tech stack is on the Volvo EX90 and ES90 and it will be adopted by all future Volvos. Moving all of the car’s major hardware and software control functions onto a central system rather than individual ECUs (the archetypal software-defined vehicles we’re increasingly hearing more about) enables more meaningful, consistent and stable over-the-air updates, particularly in the context of active safety technology and how vehicle data from accidents or near misses can be used to help cars avoid these situations in the future.

To handle the data, Volvo has been developing its own cloud architecture, which “most people are not”, says Rowan. This approach allows Volvo to retain control of all its data and make its cars safer remotely. “That’s the big story,” says Rowan, and it’s in contrast to buying an off-the-shelf cloud, “when you get nothing”. Volvo now has the second-biggest data centre in Sweden.

He says: “We run our algorithms inside the cloud architecture and then we push that back into the vehicle so that it makes the vehicle better and stronger and strengthens the algorithms.”

So why is Volvo pushing the tech story so hard? Do customers respond, or need to know?

Rowan says part of it is to drive the value of the company due to this level of advanced, proprietary technology and control of Volvo’s own destiny, but he notes “the stock is not showing that valuation” yet.

For customers, Volvo having remote control “of every node in the car” will enable more features to be added to the car. “People are still figuring out all the different use cases that we can get from that,” says Rowan, but he gives the examples of a dashcam being created out of the sensors and cameras, or an app that lets you check your car and where it’s parked remotely, as code that could be “written in an afternoon”.

“But the biggest thing is going to be around the safety aspects,” he says. “Because we get all that data, we’ll be able to look at the algorithms of all crashes. We’ll really see the crash. We’ll get the tape recording from the car that happened in Wiltshire on a wet Sunday afternoon and see what exactly happened. We’ll interrogate that and say: if we had deployed the airbag in a condition where the light is low and it’s a little bit slippery or whatever three nanoseconds earlier, that saves lives. That becomes meaningful to us as a safety brand. We need to be able to bring all of that alive to customers.”

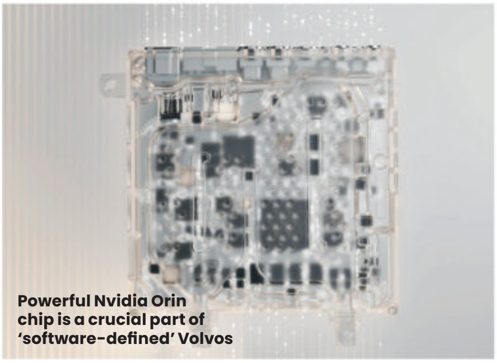
Originally a mechanical engineering apprentice at Tate & Lyle in his native Scotland, Rowan soon switched into tech and held chief operating officer roles at both BlackBerry and Dyson and was CEO of Dyson from 2017 to 2020.

He succeeded the retiring Håkan Samuelsson, who in his decade in charge successfully lifted ▸

“The four key things for the car industry are software, silicon, connectivity and data”

ES90 saloon follows the EX90 SUV in using Volvo’s Superset software system

Over-the-air updates will improve existing features and add new ones



Powerful Nvidia Orin chip is a crucial part of 'software-defined' Volvos

◂ Volvo out of the mainstream and into the premium arena, where it could compete with the likes of Audi and Mercedes-Benz. That positioning is unchanged, and Rowan says that while he will continue to burnish Volvo's traditional mechanical credentials, the job is now one of pushing Volvo's tech prowess.

"That's where the industry is going," he says. "Quite frankly, if you don't understand that and are not investing in that technology right now, you're going to be left behind. The Chinese understand this really well.

"That's why I'm flabbergasted sometimes by a lot of our competitors who still want to push for internal combustion engines. That's great. They make a lot of money out of it, but they're missing the point.

"I come from the smartphone industry. I was a BlackBerry guy. There were Nokia guys, Ericsson guys. There were Siemens guys. Philips used to build phones, Alcatel. None of them exist any more because we all thought it was about the RF circuit: how good is your connection?

"It was actually about software. It was about building an ecosystem that made the phone much more than a phone – and they missed it. The two guys who figured that out, Apple and Google, are trillion-dollar companies and the rest of them don't exist."

Investing in software is not at the expense of hardware, insists Rowan. "If we can enable that more with software and augment that, we can give a better experience. Look at Apple: I love the hardware. I love the brightness of the screen. I love the way [an iPhone] works, the way it feels, how they build it. I love the software but, more importantly, I love the whole way the thing comes together. If we can emulate that within the vehicle itself, I think that's the winning combination."

Rowan says that the strength of brands means something quite different in the premium market compared with the mainstream, where the decision will nearly always come down to price. Yet "the premiumness of cars in the electric age is still being defined" and old brand values for premium car makers won't necessarily carry over from the combustion era.

"With internal combustion engines, 'premium' is derived by [the likes of] ride quality," he says. "If that was your brand attribute, you spent a ton of money because you put a big, heavy engine in the front of the car. You want to throw that car through the corners at 120kph [75mph]. You'd spend a lot of money on making a really smooth engine, on a really nice chassis, on suspension.

"Then, bang, all of a sudden there's a new technology. You take a flat skateboard design and you get a nice low centre of gravity. Now you don't have to offset this big, heavy engine in the front of the car, so suspension and, to some extent, chassis design becomes far less important. With battery technology, it's not about the explosiveness and the smoothness of your engine, because you get torque for free. So now, what's your brand attribute?

"What we're seeing in China is people are saying: 'Why would I buy this car when I can get the same acceleration, the same ride and handling for half the price?'"

Rowan says that Volvo's brand attributes of safety and Scandinavian design won't change in the electric era, but being a leader in technology allows customers "to come to us for different reasons".

"That's one of the big, profound changes that's happening in the industry," he says. "If we can augment that [traditional positioning] with better software, then the younger demographic will come to your brand and see a pretty cool car.

"We used to sell cars to accountants, doctors, dentists and lawyers. Now we're selling a lot of cars to young software engineers, young marketeers, because the brand attributes are reasonably understated, reasonably humble, and especially when they have children, then they care about safety more than anything else."

A question about the future of estates (according to Rowan, SUVs have taken their place essentially and Volvo cannot and will not enter every market niche as a relatively small company. A range of around eight cars will be enough) prompts a wider response from Rowan about how the industry is in a "Darwinian event" around survival, and who can successfully transition into software-defined vehicles.

"The guys who figure this out quicker are going to come out strong, the guys who stick to the knitting," he says. "There will be people

"The guys with 10-15 brands will need to pare that back quickly"

Former Dyson CEO Rowan became boss of Volvo Cars three years ago

EX90's underlying tech will filter through to all future Volvo models

who don't come out of this and there will be fatalities. The guys with 10-15 brands, that's going to be super-tough. They're going to need to pare that back quickly."

Rowan expects a significant change in around 18 months as brands start to disappear, from legacy car makers and from Chinese upstarts.

"They're just not all gonna survive," he says. "There's not enough business for everybody. A lot of them are not making money already. They're selling cars at a loss just to keep cash coming in. Eventually, that plays itself out and you're going to see a thinning out of the multi-brand car companies that are going to need to say: 'I can't keep all these brands alive, so I'm going to need to shrink.'

"I don't think you're going to see car companies buying car companies. There's just not enough business for everybody. So those guys will die out. The ones that are left will be much stronger because there's less competition, and we're going to be forced to be pretty lean to get through this.

"Everybody's cutting costs. I don't think it's a bad thing for the industry. It's super-interesting. It's super-competitive right now. It's freaking hard. But at the end of the day, if you want to win in the long term, you need to go through this. The only way to take market share in a flat market is to take it from your competitor. So unfortunately, we're not in a win-win situation. Somebody's gonna lose."

HOW WILL VOLVO HANDLE TARIFF ISSUES?

While Jim Rowan is leading his company in a very different way to other automotive CEOs, there are some things there's no escaping from.

Tariffs are a big issue across the industry at the moment. Cars attract tariffs whether travelling from or to China from Europe and America, most notably the 112.5% tariffs on Chinese-built Volvos into America. "The half a per cent seems pretty punitive…" says Rowan with a smile.

On the impact of tariffs on Volvo's car production, Rowan says: "It has become a lot more complex."

He adds: "We're lucky that we have manufacturing facilities in Europe, North America and China. That gives us flexibility."

Volvo is expanding production of the EX30 from China to its plant in Ghent, Belgium, in response to European tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars. For now, right-hand-drive UK-spec EX30s will continue to come from China but that's expected to change.

The new ES90 will be built initially at Volvo's factory in Chengdu, China, which, says Rowan, "does cut down the amount of markets we're able to sell" the car in. These include the Europe Union, where it attracts a 30% tariff, and particularly the US, where the tariff would be 112.5%.

"So that takes that off the table," says Rowan. But he does "have capacity in Charleston" at Volvo's North Carolina plant and ES90 production for the US coming from there was an option.

"We can still sell it into some of the markets in south-east Asia, Korea, the UK, Latin America," he says. "But it does cut down the amount of markets we can sell it in."

Production of the EX30 is expanding from China to Belgium to avoid tariffs

LANCIA
GT 324XT

The brand that refused to die

Lancia's odds-defying revival starts with this car. **KRIS CULMER** drives it

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

Until recently, Lancia was withering away on death row, reduced since 2017 to a single model in a single market. One could almost sense hard-headed FCA chief Sergio Marchionne's irritation as the Fiat 500-based Ypsilon continued to sell in droves. It's thanks only to Italian drivers' patriotism and indifference to needless expense and the latest tech that Lancia survived for long enough to be saved by Stellantis. Credit must go to founding Stellantis boss Carlos Tavares for appreciating Lancia's value enough to hand the brand sufficient funding for a 10-year revival of its core model lines.

Precisely what is that inherent value, though? That's what I'm hoping to discover, driving the new Ypsilon in Turin – home to the first factory that employed Vincenzo Lancia way back in 1898, the first site he opened under his own name and the famous Mirafiori plant, now also host to the Fiat and Lancia historic car collection.

The Ypsilon comes in Ibrida and Elettrica forms, and I've chosen the Elettrica, it being Lancia's first EV. The former uses a 99bhp mild-hybrid 1.2-litre turbocharged petrol triple, the latter a 154bhp motor and a 51kWh battery. Those specs feel very familiar because they are, from the many small cars based on Stellantis's e-CMP platform.

The Ypsilon Elettrica drives virtually indistinguishably from a Peugeot 208 or Vauxhall Corsa EV, then. But I don't think that's a bad thing. Those cars have sold extremely well and the finer points of ride and handling aren't priorities for many buyers in this market. The Ypsilon is smooth, comfortable and refined on the autostrada, and in town it has a healthy reserve of power and it will round corners sharply. And if that really isn't enough for you, exciting news: there's a rally-inspired HF version coming.

What really sets everyday cars apart, prices aside, is design. The reason one person falls in love with the Jeep Avenger may well be why another orders an Alfa Romeo Junior instead, despite their identical specs. Lancia has always been a design brand and, in this coming era of increasing mechanical and technical similarity, going all in on that appears to be an ideal strategy.

"Many people came expressly to ask me to work for Lancia. There was passion in their eyes, and when I told them about the possible plans for the rebirth of this glorious brand, they lit up," creative chief Jean-Pierre Ploué (designer of such favourites as the Mk1 Renault Twingo, Citroën C6 and DS 3) recently told Italian publication Auto & Design.

Of the four design pillars his Turin studio team defined, 'meaningful' perhaps isn't the easiest to identify in the Ypsilon, but 'iconic' I can see in the Stratos-inspired tail-lights and, while 'consistent' and 'eclectic' might seem to clash, the exterior sparks interest in its many details – most unusually the, erm, Y-front – without becoming a hotchpotch.

Same inside, where unusual details abound: knurled gold air-vent adjusters, slices of wood, an art deco dashboard pattern and a table atop the centre console – whose round shape is replicated in the doors and 'Sala Hub' behind the touchscreen (short for Sound Air Light Augmentation and meant to simplify the digital experience, apparently). And then there are the rust-coloured, boiserie-patterned velvet seats – simply fabulous.

The Ypsilon's official range is 250 miles, so I expect to finish the 160-mile drive to my hotel in Turin with plenty in reserve, but the number on the display plunges alarmingly as I cruise at 80mph, such that I have to rise early the next morning to get a big charge. Thankfully, Zap-Map reveals that there are many chargers in this industrial city, and the Plentitude network (run by Italian oil giant Eni) offers both an easy app sign-up process and a slick-looking 'CCS Hypercharger'. The rate races to 89kW (the Ypsilon's limit is 100kW) and all is well – until suddenly it isn't. The charging process terminates halfway for no obvious reason and fails to restart. Then the car bongs loudly and says: "Electric traction system failure: stop the vehicle, see user manual." Ah.

There's work to be done then, and the technicians tell me later they could find no fault with the car. When I visit the FCA Heritage Hub (see box, above), the guide suggests some Italians aren't too hot on the Ypsilon either, unconvinced by the design and annoyed that it's built in Spain.

It's evident that rebuilding Lancia is going to be difficult in many ways – but when you see the history the brand has and the passion it still evokes, you realise why it's an effort worth making.

The Ypsilon is now on sale in Italy, France, Spain and Benelux, priced from £21k in petrol guise and £29k as an EV.

Lancia's aesthetic flair is apparent inside, notably with the velvet seat trim

"Going all in on design is an ideal strategy"

Culmer's Ypsilon charged briskly – at first; official range is 250 miles

The Ypsilon will be joined in 2026 by a 4.7m-long electric SUV called the Gamma, based on the new STLA Medium platform and with a claimed 435-mile range, and then in 2028 by a new 4.4m-long Delta electric hatchback.

Lancia has a lot to live up to

Visiting the FCA Heritage Hub, I wonder: which other brand could present such a dizzying array of magnificence as there is here at Mirafiori? From the Lambda – so much skinnier than any other 1920s car, thanks to its novel monocoque – to the brutish Aurelia, the pricelessly beautiful B20 Spider, Flavia and Flaminia coupés, still futuristically wedge-shaped Deltas and Beta Montecarlos, the Stratos supercar and more, intermingling with coachbuilt stunners and title-winning Formula 1 and WRC cars. How did a company like this ever come so close to the brink?

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"Simple and easy to use is a mantra that could follow it around"

FIRST REPORT

RENAULT SCENIC

A jury made this a Car of the Year. A juror must now live with that decision

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if the 2024 Car of the Year really is the standout family electric SUV on the market

Being a Car of the Year juror has its perks. Superb access to the industry's top executives. The earliest chance to drive the very latest new cars. World-leading expertise in mid-size electric crossovers.

The last of those felt like a key part of the brief in the 2023 testing cycle to decide the 2024 Car of the Year, because every launch that year seemed to be a 4.5m-long, five-seat electric car from a mainstream European manufacturer.

Such is the launch cycle of new cars and, as a result, the all-new cars tested for Car of the Year, and the convergence of industry trends. A year later and smaller cars made up the bulk of testing.

The Renault Scenic emerged as the very best of the breed in the class of 2024, according to the 60-strong pan-European jury, beating the likes of the Peugeot 3008 and Volvo EX30. There was a sense of surprise even from those within Renault that the Scenic had won, given that its major EV push was to come a year later with the Renault 5.

But that's no slight on the Scenic or its achievement. Car of the Year is only ever a reflection of the cars launched that year (if they're all mid-size electric crossovers, then that's the way it is) and cars can only beat what's put in front of them. The Scenic did just that and stood out from its peers for both rational and emotional qualities, such as its impressive kerb appeal.

This new Scenic is quite different from models that wore the badge before. It has morphed from a versatile MPV into a mainstream large five-seat hatch, effectively a longer and taller Megane to free up more interior space. So big is the departure from the original Scenic to this new one that you wonder if the Scenic badge is an apt one, yet we'll leave such conclusions for the miles and months to come.

Today's Scenic is an EV with two battery options: 60kWh for 260 miles of range and 87kWh for 379 miles in its most efficient trim level. The lower-range Scenic has a front-mounted electric motor with 168bhp and the bigger-battery model is powered by a 215bhp motor. Charging speeds also increase with the battery capacity, from a standard 130kW to 150kW.

Our test car has the bigger battery and is in Iconic trim (Techno and Esprit Alpine are also offered), which tops the range and, on the subject of range, has 10 miles shaved off the entry Techno model's mostly due to the larger, 20in alloys that come with this trim. Still, on the spec sheet, the Scenic is one of the rangiest electric cars of its type.

A Techno-spec Scenic starts from £37,495 with the smaller battery. The bigger battery in Techno trim is another £3500, pushing it past the £40,000 luxury car tax threshold that kicks in for EVs next month. The Esprit Alpine and Iconic trims are available with the larger battery only, the former starting from £43,495 and the latter from £45,495.

The standard equipment on all Scenics is impressive and includes the excellent Google infotainment/operating system that runs off a 12in portrait screen in the middle of the dashboard. On top of that, your £4500 to move from Techno to Iconic with a big battery adds those larger wheels, a panoramic sunroof, a 360deg camera, a 'hands-free parking' function, a Harman Kardon sound system, lighter interior trim and a lightly massaging driver's seat.

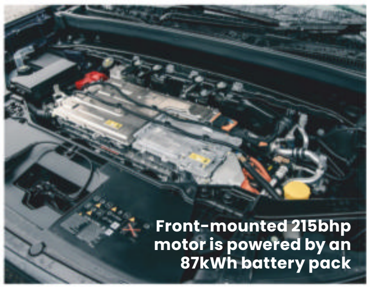
There are no factory-fit options listed in the brochure, only some

SECOND OPINION

Mark's comment about wheel size rings true. I've driven Techno and Esprit Alpine versions and the cheaper one (with 19in wheels) was far comfier, quieter and more settled. At its best, this car should be a dynamic match for anything in its class. Maybe some wheel-and-tyre experimenting is called for. **MS**

Tisshaw likes the interior design and Google infotainment

Driveline refinement is already impressing; the ride on 20in wheels less so


Front-mounted 215bhp motor is powered by an 87kWh battery pack

dealer ones. The sole choice you have – or chance to pay more – is for paint, such as the £1250 metallic Midnight Blue of our test car.

I recall from COTY testing that the smaller wheels of the Techno Scenic made for a sweeter and more fluent car to drive overall. So what that extra kit does to its everyday appeal versus a nicer drive on smaller wheels is another one for the watchlist in this long-term test.

The Scenic is a car I got to know reasonably well in the COTY judging process and I'm looking forward to getting reacquainted with it again. I admired the styling from the off, not only on the outside but on the inside too, where it had a fresh and modern feel.

Time hasn't diminished its kerb appeal. While a plethora of new rivals have been launched even in the year since the Scenic emerged into such a congested segment, it still looks among the best of the electric family hatches.

Hatchbacks of its size and type are never going to win beauty contests because of how proportions are affected by the packaging needs of the battery, yet I like the Scenic's techy approach, as opposed to the Tesla-aping homogenised blob look that so many new entrants seem to adopt. It also avoids the weirdness that many EVs have, where they try to look different almost for the sake of it, and all grace and refinement goes out the window. Good morning, Volkswagen ID 4.

On first impressions on the road, the driveline refinement stands out as an instant star quality. This is a smooth, easy-going car to pilot. The ride is lumpier than I recall, though. That could well be those 20in wheels. The Google system inside the car is another happy memory: it's simple and easy to use.

'Simple and easy to use' feels like a mantra that could follow the Scenic around. It has a lot of bases covered and feels like a car in which you can rack up the miles in a fuss-free way, a kind of car you can enjoy driving and using and yet not feel guilty about leaving a crisp packet or two in the footwell because it doesn't carry any airs or graces about it. Let's find out.

MARK TISSHAW

TEST DATA

RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH LONG RANGE ICONIC

Price new £45,495 **Price as tested** £46,745 **Options** Midnight Blue metallic paint £1250 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 369 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 3.5mpkWh (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
mark.tisshaw@haymarket.com

CUPRA TAVASCAN

Disconcerting behaviour in a car park prompts a loss of confidence

MILEAGE 2049
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To find out if the Tavascan really is a sporty SUV – and if the segment needs it

I'm leaving a multi-storey car park in Twickenham. It's a classic, mid-20th-century type, with a tight descent. I've used it hundreds of times in many different cars without issue. As I descend the second-floor ramp, the Tavascan thinks the approaching first floor is an oncoming vehicle so it slams on the emergency brakes. A scary moment. But they release quickly and I put it down to bad luck.

A few days later, it happens again, turning down another ramp. This time the sensors think I'm about to be shunted from the side but it is, in fact, a low concrete lip that is in no danger of touching the car.

Apparently, the Tavascan's safety systems are highly sensitive – far more so than its Volkswagen ID 4 and ID 5 cousins, which I've driven in this car park without issue. So an extra-cautious approach is needed.

It's now a few weeks later and I'm taking the turns wider than usual to steer clear of those concrete lips and almost crawling down the ramps to avoid a repeat of the first incident.

I'm mid-turn down the penultimate ramp. SLAM! The emergency brakes go on… but this time they don't go off. The wheels are still pointing straight (so across the slope) and the car is now slipping down the ramp. The steering wheel is locked and vibrating violently and the brakes are not releasing. I try to pump the brakes. Nothing. I try to turn the wheel. Nothing. I press the accelerator, hoping this will release the brakes. Nothing. Now I'm panicking slightly.

Then, after trying all those again, the brakes finally release. I drive down the next ramp with caution. I now have no confidence in the car's safety system and drive tentatively.

I've since spoken to Cupra, who say they will investigate the issue and send engineers to inspect the car. I'll let you know the outcome.

Since those incidents, I've not experienced much else, thankfully. But they've sadly changed my view of the Tavascan, just as it was beginning to become quite a good everyday companion.

WILL RIMELL

Camer
Park Ass
Safety sensors are detecting non-existent risks in a traditional-style multi-storey

LOVE IT

INTERIOR
The cabin is just brilliant. It's funky and different while still being very ergonomic. It makes me feel good when I drive it.

LOATHE IT

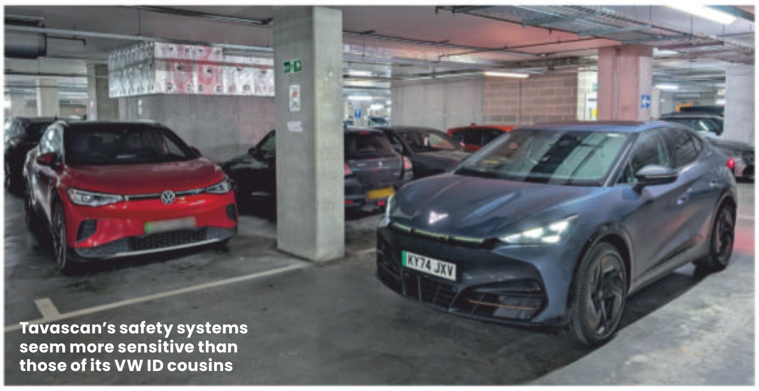
HAPTIC BUTTONS
They adorn the steering wheel and are a faff to use. I find I touch them accidentally quite a lot. Bring back real buttons, please.

TEST DATA

CUPRA TAVASCAN 77KWH AFV 340 VZ1

Price new £55,935 **Price as tested** £58,265 **Faults** Over-eager safety system **Expenses** None **Range** 223 miles **Economy** 2.9mpkWh **Last seen** 12.3.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
will.rimell@haymarket.com


Tavascan's safety systems seem more sensitive than those of its VW ID cousins

FIRST REPORT

TESLA MODEL 3

Does a 'certified pre-owned' Tesla feel box-fresh or decidedly used?

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To find out if an approved used car is the best route into Tesla ownership

Sales manager Rajbansh talks Clements through the EV's seemingly endless tech

Across the past decade, industry disruptor Tesla has been *the* global automotive success story. And much of that success has been spearheaded by the affordable Model 3, more than a million of which have found homes since 2017. But 'affordable' is a relative term, and a new one will still set you back just shy of £40k – or nearer £45k for the reassurance of a bigger-battery Long Range model.

As our 15 January used buying guide reported, those first cars are now being replaced, so the market is flooded with Model 3s – which is great news for buyers, with prices starting from just £12k. There's plenty to choose from, whether you want the standard 252bhp Rear-Wheel Drive model or the loopy 444bhp dual-motor Performance.

I decided that 346bhp (and 0-60mph in a shade over 4.0sec) was probably more than enough and a claimed 360-mile range suited me, so I opted for the Long Range AWD.

My car has covered 37,771 miles and, being of 2021 vintage, got a heat pump as standard and was made in China (the timber on the dashboard and doors is the giveaway). Finished in my favourite colour scheme of Midnight Silver with black pleather interior and attractive silver multi-spoke 19in wheels, it would retail for around £25k-£28k through Tesla's Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) scheme, and I picked it up from the Gatwick branch in West Sussex.

"All CPO Teslas undergo a 200-point inspection that goes through all the vitals of the vehicle," explained sales manager Kul Rajbansh, who ran me through all of the car's features, pointing out that the tyres on CPO cars must have at least 10,000 miles left on them at the point of sale and there are checks to the cosmetics, interior, battery and brakes.

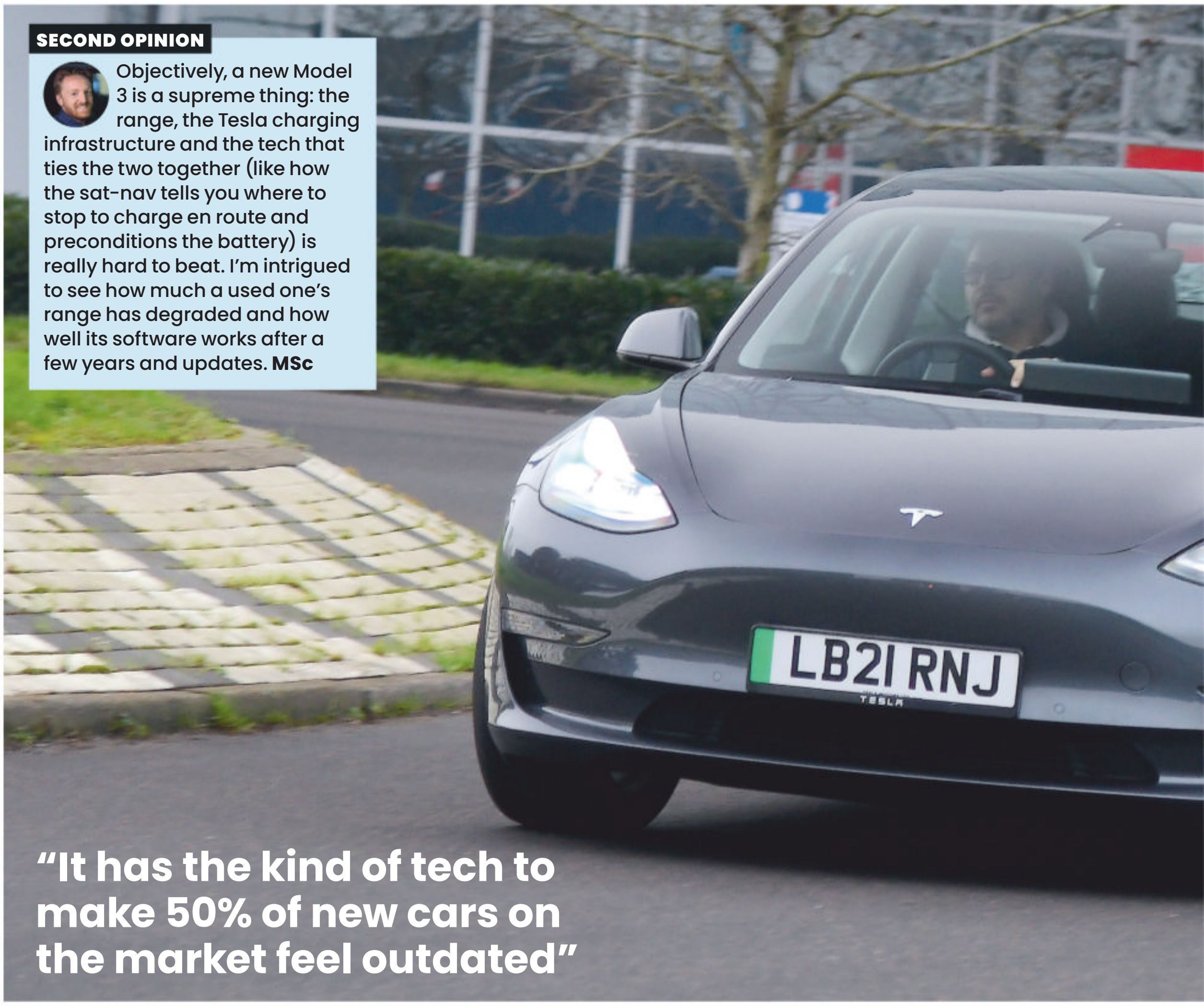
There's the odd scuff on the alloys, as you would expect of a four-year-old car, but it's otherwise very smart and has had a software upgrade to the latest operating system, along with Enhanced Autopilot (as on all CPO cars).

Usefully, going through a main dealer also adds a year or 10,000 miles to the remaining term or mileage of the original four-year/50,000-mile warranty, including Europe-wide roadside assistance, which is not to be sniffed at. (The separate warranty for the battery and drive unit is unaffected, at eight years or 100,000 miles for a standard car and eight years or 120,000 miles for a Long Range or Performance.)

If you're coming from an ICE car or even a relatively conventional EV, I would recommend getting someone like Kul to give you a guided tour of a Tesla, because even this four-year-old Model 3 has the kind of tech to make 50% of the new cars on the market feel outdated.

A few weeks in, I'm still trying to get my head around all the things the car can do, both remotely via the phone app and inside, where

Absence of instruments takes some getting used to; software updates keep a used Tesla fresh



SECOND OPINION

Objectively, a new Model 3 is a supreme thing: the range, the Tesla charging infrastructure and the tech that ties the two together (like how the sat-nav tells you where to stop to charge en route and preconditions the battery) is really hard to beat. I'm intrigued to see how much a used one's range has degraded and how well its software works after a few years and updates. **MSc**

> "It has the kind of tech to make 50% of new cars on the market feel outdated"

everything bar wipers, indicators and gears is controlled by the huge, 15in touchscreen in the centre of the otherwise completely bare dash.

As a fan of buttons, that alone has given me a bit of a headache, and at first I felt the Tesla interface wasn't as intuitive as Apple CarPlay. I think that's just about what you're used to, and once you've linked everything to your phone (easily done via QR codes for key apps such as Spotify), it's pretty seamless, and the built-in Google Maps sat-nav is remarkably good at guessing a journey time.

In truth, it doesn't take too long to realise that most of the car's design and technology is focused on making life as easy as possible.

The single-pedal operation works superbly and it soon becomes a matter of pride never to need to use the friction brakes, and I was right to decide that the performance of the Long Range AWD would be more than adequate. Most of the time I leave it in Chill mode, because throttle response in Standard can be brutal in the wet; it's all too easy to light up the rear wheels. No wonder the Performance version gives supercars nightmares.

The Model 3 is also vastly roomy, certainly more so than it looks from the outside, with the full-length tinted glass roof giving even more of an impression of space.

Which means there's plenty left for the large elephant that follows me around wherever I go: the fact that, right now, for many people a Tesla is a fairly uncomfortable thing to drive in Britain. Tesla registrations across Europe dropped by 45% year on year in January 2025, when overall EV sales were up 37% in the same period, and I reckon a lot of that can be attributed to *that* gesture by figurehead Elon Musk. I'm sure some will dismiss this as me living in a London bubble, but I have friends who will refuse to go in a Tesla, let alone buy one.

So it's very clever and more than a little controversial, but is the Model 3 any good as an actual car? Right now, I'm still trying to decide, because I find myself so bamboozled by its 'otherness'. But that makes me particularly intrigued for the months ahead, and I will try to come back with a definitive answer once I've got my head around it.

ALASTAIR CLEMENTS

TEST DATA

TESLA MODEL 3 LONG RANGE ALL-WHEEL DRIVE

Price new £49,935 (in 2021) **Price as tested** £28,000 **Options** Enhanced Autopilot £3400, Midnight Silver metallic paint £1000, 19in silver sports wheels £1450 (prices all in 2021) **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 360 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 4.2mpkWh (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

alastair.clements@haymarket.com

Our MX-5's headlights did their best to illuminate Trac Môn in Anglesey

MAZDA MX-5

Our man takes part in the world's first unlit track day (track night?)

MILEAGE 6756

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT How easy is it to run a convertible as your only car in the depths of a British winter?

LOVE IT

THE IDEAL SET-UP

Track mode is brilliant, intuitive and chosen via an actual button.

LOATHE IT

GONE IN A FLASH

The windscreen washer bottle is only 1.2 litres in size – not ideal for Wales in the winter.

I'm peddling my MX-5 as fast as I dare. In front of me is almost perfect darkness. I know there's a sharp right-hander coming up quickly, but I'm finding it difficult to pick a braking point, because behind me are penetrating high beams from the bonnet-mounted foglights of a 1990s Mitsubishi Evo rally car. I turn right, make it round the corner without incident, then indicate, stay tucked in close to the white line and hear the tsu-tsu-schu of a wastegate fly past on my left.

I'm taking part in the "world's first unlit night-time track day" at Anglesey Circuit. Yep, North Wales, at night, in the winter.

The first hurdle to overcome was the fact I had never actually driven at Anglesey before. So I decided to arrive well ahead of schedule, which meant getting in the MX-5 pretty damn early and completing the long slog from London to Wales. A tiny sports car shouldn't be this good at motorway cruising. A long sixth gear, Apple CarPlay and heated seats helped get me there feeling relaxed.

I massively underestimated quite how much faff and form-filling was involved with taking part in a 'world's first', so I actually achieved only five sighter laps in the daytime. Gulp. Before I knew it, I was in the pit lane (the only artificially lit area of Anglesey) waiting to head out.

There was potential for a bit of tomfoolery on track (differing levels of speed and experience), but none occurred. The camaraderie level at the driver's briefing was off the charts. We were all pioneers in our own small way. Doing our best.

The sessions flew by without incident. The MX-5's Track mode is brilliant, allowing quite the angle and velocity of slip before it intervenes. The steering is a delight: loads of feedback, light and direct. Especially appreciated in the one session when I went roof down, jacket on, so didn't have the space to move my arms around much.

Driving home the next morning, I had a few hours to contemplate. I couldn't have picked a better car. Sixth gear for the motorway, direct steering for the track and a boot big enough for an overnight bag. If only it were fitted with anti-glare glass.

MURRAY SCULLION

Scan the QR code to virtually join us for laps of Anglesey in the dark.

Mitsubishi Evo rally car was among those waking the neighbours

TEST DATA

MAZDA MX-5 2.0 HOMURA

Price new £34,835 **Price as tested** £35,435 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 39.2mpg **Last seen** 12.3.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

murray.scullion@haymarket.com

THANKS TO MISSION MOTORSPORT AND MAZDA UK

AMG
KW24 URM

MERCEDES-AMG CLE

We slap on our fast Merc L-plate and get some expert track training

MILEAGE 3561
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To generate a progress report on the evolution of the old-school Merc coupé

Driving your first AMG is not something that anyone should take lightly. I mean, just look at the bulldog stance and menacing glare of the CLE 53 and tell me you wouldn't be at least a tad nervous.

So I was thankful to be given not only the key to this car but also an invitation to Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey for an AMG driving experience and driver training day.

Situated on the historic race track at Brooklands, it's an impressive emporium – and all the more so when I visited because it was hosting a classic car auction. Well, unless there was some bizarre German licensing deal for pink Ford Edsels I never knew about.

There's a wide range of experiences on offer here, ranging from brief passenger rides to full driving days; in anything from EVs to off-roaders to super-saloons; and costing from £45 to £695. There are even sessions for kids.

I was, of course, delighted to avoid a silent soap bar and be directed towards a C63 – albeit the commercial bomb that is the S E Performance four-cylinder plug-in hybrid. Instructing me was Keith Robinson, who proved as chatty, affable and enthusiastic as he is knowledgeable and experienced, having raced Ferrari GTs at a high level. Also among the instructors was Mauro Calo – a name familiar to Autocar devotees and James Bond film directors alike.

A session at Brooklands will teach you how to drive fast and get the most out of your AMG

It's a tight and technical handling circuit but with a good mix of corner types and space on the straights for some serious speed, especially when you have 671bhp at your disposal. As I built my confidence, Keith gave me encouragement and pointers on my technique with the controls, braking points and cornering lines. I'd not driven on a damp track before, nor in a plug-in hybrid, so there was much to learn. As we finished up, he got me to try a lap in EV mode. The C63 is still quick even when silent, and the fact that this duality is possible is technically impressive – but then so is a train, and I'm never going to get excited about that. Thank heaven for the news about a new AMG V8…

LOVE IT

MOOD LIGHTING

The aesthetic tastes of many of my colleagues seem to be stuck in the 1970s. Sorry, guys, but this coloured light bath is very cool.

LOATHE IT

SNARKY SIX-FOOTERS

Two taller friends complained of feeling a bit cramped in the back, but they were lucky that a coupé had back seats at all.

Anyway, the dance became much more enjoyable when I swapped into an A45 S. Thanks to this mega-hatch's comparatively uncomplicated turbo petrol engine and lighter weight, I got into something of a flow and was soon lapping quickly and confidently.

The skidpan was a very different experience. I understand the fundamentals of powersliding a car, but Mercedes' four-wheel drive system turns them on their head. Steering into a drift will ruin it. Instead, you have to tip the car sharply sideways, then hold the wheel pretty much straight while pumping the throttle to maintain momentum. Keith seemed genuinely impressed that I pulled off a '4Matic drift' (albeit not consistently), but all my instincts were telling me that what I was doing was weird and wrong. I decided to leave Autocar's smoky-photo duties to Mauro…

Perhaps the most eye-opening experience of all, though, was the drag strip. Even with far from ideal surfaces underwheel, using the C63's launch control yielded 0-62mph in only around four seconds. We've become used to such numbers, but sit and count four elephants and you'll appreciate how little time that actually is. There was some serious thudding when my timing was off, but it just violently bolted when I aced it. I've felt similar sickening acceleration in many EVs, but some accompanying engine noise makes all the difference.

Finally, I was taught how to do an emergency stop through standing water – perhaps counterintuitively, softly did the trick. Slamming the pedal to the floor simply locked up the wheels, despite the best efforts of the ABS.

A half-day AMG experience is definitely not cheap at more than £500, but it's something I'd highly recommend. And you can choose your own adventure, within reason: if 70mph is your comfortable limit, they will happily let you do that.

Hopping back into the CLE 53 to drive home, I had a new-found understanding of fast cars and a greater belief in my own ability to handle one – which, of course, is precisely the idea.

KRIS CULMER

TEST DATA

MERCEDES-AMG CLE 53 4MATIC+ COUPE NIGHT EDITION PREMIUM PLUS

Price new £78,825 **Price as tested** £81,445
Faults None **Expenses** New tyres £322.67
Economy 28.1mpg **Last seen** 12.3.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
mark.tisshaw@haymarket.com

INEOS GRENADIER

We've turned crimson, just like our 4x4. Here's why

MILEAGE 10,790
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if the spirit of the classic Land Rover Defender really does live on here

You don't need the diesel engine to have enough torque for towing

The Ineos Grenadier has slotted into my daily life as easily as its flat sides and large mirrors help it slot into tighter parking spaces, as seen below in one of Gatwick airport's short-term car parks.

The Grenadier's turning circle is large and it is quite a big car, so I was very pleased that with minimal shuffling I eased it gracefully into an end-of-row bay – my favourite kind – before going on my merry travels.

I returned and took this picture, because I was so happy about how little space I'd left between the car and the barrier, and drove home.

Imagine my surprise when, a few days later, the good people at Ineos informed me that they'd been sent a parking penalty charge notice by NCP, this car park's operator, and asked if I could please sort it out.

Perplexed, I looked at NCP's evidence. It turned out that if I'd walked around the left side of the car, crouched down and squinted, there were some more of the little yellow blobs seen in front of the car, which once, perhaps decades ago, were cross hatchings. Which means this wasn't a valid parking space.

That was news to me, because it looked a lot like one when I left it. And it would have been news to the private parking sector's Single Code of Practice, too, which says that "signs and surface markings must be designed, applied and maintained in such a way as to be visible, legible and unambiguous to drivers", which these were not.

I appealed the penalty charge on those grounds, and NCP cancelled it as a quite annoying – by which I mean infuriating – "gesture of goodwill", attaching a reminder that I should "take into account the displayed terms and conditions, to ensure you do not receive any further parking charge notices".

I'll tell you what, NCP: rather than passively aggressively telling me to be careful, why don't *you* play by *your own* rules?

It took a social media post before NCP acknowledged that, on review, I shouldn't have received the charge in the first place. It also promised it would sort the space out; I will check on it next time I go to Gatwick.

I've been trying to not just use the Grenadier for the daily grind: I've also used it to tow an Audi A2 home from Shropshire (Prior Conviction, 5 March), a task at which it was particularly adept. A non-folding towbar is fitted (£630), which works well, although it's mounted quite high, gives the car a rough and ready look that I like very much, and gives me something to stand on when reaching deep into the boot.

And here's a great thing about that split tailgate: you can have a trailer hooked up, with the jockey wheel handle pointing forwards, yet still open the boot doors fully for easy access. And one side door being smaller than the other leaves room to walk around it: you're never squished between door and trailer.

This is the kind of sensible, thoughtful design touch I can fully get behind – the sort that makes me overlook a Grenadier's foibles. There are some, and I will come to them, but it eases them away.
MATT PRIOR

LOVE IT

RELIABLE INFOTAINMENT

The car hooks up to my phone, fuss-free and error-free, every time. It's amazing how often this isn't the case in new cars.

LOATHE IT

GAS GUZZLER

Here's a 3.0-litre petrol engine in a two-point-ahem-tonne 4x4, so it's doing a little over 20mpg – Ford Ranger Raptor territory.

TEST DATA

INEOS GRENADIER 3.0 T FIELDMASTER

Price new £76,140 **Price as tested** £88,917 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 20.8mpg **Last seen** 12.3.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

Beware: park here and you will get a PCN from NCP

SNAPSHOTS

MINI COOPER S

Mileage 4143 **Last seen** 5.3.25
With so many of the Mini's functions tied to its huge central touchscreen, the optional head-up display is a blessing, but there's one thing missing: the indicator flashes. The noise of the blinker is easily lost amid loud music, and with the light-up indication out of sight, it's all too easy to continue down the motorway after a lane change with it still flashing away. **JH**

VOLVO EX40

Mileage 4022 **Last seen** 5.3.25
A call to pick up a family member from Gatwick airport had me scrambling around north London for a charger at short notice. It was 4.30pm – prime time for taxi drivers to charge – and panic set in as I had just two miles left before finally being able to bolt into a charging bay. It filled up sufficiently at 110kW. Enough time to regain my composure. **JW**

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

Mileage 7708 **Last seen** 12.3.25
Heated seats and a heated steering wheel are essentials for me (yes, I'm spoilt). On a recent commute, though, satisfaction turned to consternation when, once the Tiguan and I had warmed up, I pressed the button to deactivate the wheel heating and had my request roundly ignored, and the same when I asked via the touchscreen – and again an hour and 60 miles later. It gave 'sweaty palms' a whole new meaning. **KC**

LIGHTEN UP A LITTLE, WILL YOU?

Enjoy the carefree charm of the third-generation Panda from just £2000

If you want a quirky baby hatchback with genuine off-road ability, there's only one car for the job: the Fiat Panda 4x4. The third generation of the ever-so-cute Italian, launched in 2011, added a cheeky and cuddly look, improved interior technology and greater refinement to its famous versatility.

"The Panda is one of those cars that is exceptionally hard to be harsh to, one that revels in being what it is: a wonderfully compact, fun car," was our summary when we road tested it at the time.

Its ease of use and classless appeal helped earn the Panda an impressive 4.5-star verdict, trouncing rivals in a segment that was then full of overachievers – the Volkswagen Up chief among them.

Fast forward to 2025 and the Panda is accessible to all, with well-used, high-mileage examples available for less than £2000.

If your budget is tight, you will end up with a Panda powered by either a 68bhp 1.2-litre four-cylinder or 84bhp turbocharged 0.9-litre two-cylinder petrol engine.

The 1.2 is fine if you intend to use the Panda for city hops, but it feels a bit sluggish on a rural road or motorway. It's smooth and a little more refined than the thrummy-sounding Twinair, but then that can be comfortably driven around town and up the motorway.

A tidy Twinair with around 50k to 60k miles on the clock should set you back around £3500, but it's well worth spending the extra cash – and some versions of the Twinair won't cost you a penny in road tax.

There's also a 1.3-litre four-cylinder diesel, the Multijet, which has more than enough grunt and will easily manage around 50mpg.

If you're after more fun from your city car, plus all-terrain usability, the Panda 4x4 is the one to go for,

Later models gained a touchscreen but the basic design went unchanged

What we said then

17 APRIL 2013

"The Panda 4x4's mix of city car and SUV traits remains as unique as ever. This version adds expertly judged style to the list, making a truly distinctive car all the more appealing. However, the city car and the SUV don't meet exactly in the middle of the void between them where the Panda 4x4 sits; this is much more a steroidal supermini than a shrunken mud-plugger. It's a bit of fun, not a proper utility machine."

with its increased ride height, bright skidplates and chunky styling.

The 4x4 rides acceptably, thanks to its small alloys and soft springs, and because it's primarily front-driven (power is diverted to the rear in the event of slip), it's as fun to drive as a standard Panda, albeit with a bit more roll.

For proper green-laning, you will want the Panda Cross. It's a proper trooper, with more prominent skidplates, a dedicated off-road driving mode that locks the differential for permanent four-wheel drive and hill descent control. A tidy, 60k-mile example will be around £2000 dearer than a standard 4x4 in similar condition.

Inside, the Panda shows its cheaper side with plenty of hard-wearing, scratchy plastics, but it's nevertheless pleasant to ride around in, with an airy ambience.

If you're after some modern touches, we would point you towards the facelifted Panda, which arrived in 2020 and could be had with a 7.0in infotainment touchscreen that benefits from smartphone mirroring.

That facelift also introduced a 1.0-litre three-cylinder mild hybrid. It's easy to operate around town and the electrical system gives a bit of extra poke. Mind you, the three-pot is pretty staid and you have to work hard to get it up to speed – plus it will fall 10 short of the official 46mpg.

The 4x4 versions are even more charming inside, with colourful dashboard trim pieces and funky patterns on the seats.

Space inside is best described as adequate, as the rear bench can only seat two passengers. The boot is large enough for your weekly food shop but little more.

Space limitations and material quality are easily overlooked in a car like the Panda, though. No other city car pulls at your heartstrings in the same way or offers as much fun, whether you're bumbling around town or tackling the rough stuff.

SAM PHILLIPS

It's no Defender, but you wouldn't even try this in any other city car

> **"It's exceptionally hard to be harsh to. It revels in being what it is: a wonderfully compact, fun car"**

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

BEN McCAULDER

"I learned to drive in an original Panda, so I'm fond of them. My justification for my 4x4 Twinair was living in the sticks and my other cars being low-slung. It's a great palate-cleanser. It's a joy and more engaging than it has any right to be. While it's cheap and cheerful, goodies like Bluetooth and heated seats make for a nice place to be.

"The official MPG is optimistic but local roads aren't conducive to hypermiling. Servicing is cheap but I have had bills. These were all reasonable given the age and mileage – brakes, springs – and some were preventative. The only unusual one was a failed propshaft bearing. The official part is pricey but aftermarket ones are available."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ DRIVETRAIN

The rear differential on 4x4 Pandas can weep oil, typically caused by a worn or damaged seal. Severe leaks might require a new diff, but if the leak is only minor, a new seal can solve it. A diff can cost around £300 to £900 on eBay.

Oil can also leak from the propshaft where it meets the front transfer case. The seal is often the culprit and costs £20 to £40 for a new one – a complex job, though, so best done by a professional.

■ BRAKES

Listen for any squealing noises from the rear brakes. Cleaning them and adding grease can help matters. For the worst cases, Fiat offers vibration dampers to stop the issue entirely.

■ INTERIOR

The rear seats can rattle but greasing the latches can sort this out. Trim pieces and the dashboard can also rattle, but that's something you will have to live with.

■ BODY

The 4x4s might have tackled the odd rough track, so check the skidplates, plastic bumpers and underside for any damage.

Boot mechanism and latch is known for being faulty, so check it shuts properly, else you will have to fork out for a new assembly.

■ WHEELS

There's plenty of tyre sidewall to protect them, but have a glance at the alloys to make sure they're free of scuffs.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

The Panda achieved a four-star safety rating from Euro NCAP back in 2012, scoring highly (82%) for adult occupant protection.

While some versions of the Panda cost nothing to tax, you can always save money with a Multijet diesel, which in most cases costs only £20 to tax. Cross and 4x4 examples can be as much as £190 to tax annually.

Pop, Easy and Lounge were the main trim levels on the standard car. There was also the Trekking, which looked like the 4x4 but was in fact front-wheel drive. Special editions include the City Life, City Cross, Garmin, Waze and Wild.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£1500-£3999

Well-used Pop, Easy and Lounge cars. Twinair and 1.2-litre petrol engines dominate.

£4000-£7999

A wider mix of engines and trims with more diesels. Plenty of tidy 4x4s with reasonable miles on the clock. It's easy to find a car with a full history or one former owner.

£8000-£11,999

Very clean, cared-for examples. Lots of 4x4, Cross and Twinair cars and plenty of later mild hybrids.

£12,000 AND ABOVE

Newer, immaculate examples with low miles. Twinair and mild-hybrid engines. Dealer only.

ONE WE FOUND

FIAT PANDA 0.9 TWINAIR 4x4, 2014, 73,000 MILES, £5999

You can't go wrong with this tidy little scamp. It has the punchier petrol engine, the benefit of four-wheel drive and just one previous keeper. There's plenty of service history with it, too, and it's funkier than usual inside, thanks to its khaki and cream cloth seats.

My car & I

Out of lockdown and into my dream car

FEELS LIKE HOME
G9 OHH

Like a lot of people, when Covid restraints were at last lifted in 2021, Ron Mookerjee decided to start looking for the used car of his dreams. He had always wanted a BMW M3, and in mid-2022 he tracked down a 2017 F80-generation saloon with the optional M-DCT dual-clutch automatic gearbox at EAG Specialist Cars in St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

"They're M-series specialists, so I had no concerns buying from them," Ron tells me. "The car had only done 23,000 miles and had the optional Performance Package with an extra 19bhp over regular versions, taking its total power to 444bhp."

The package also brings sportier suspension and differential settings, revised electronics and unique front seats – but much as Ron loves them all, when I ask him what he paid for the car, he winces.

"The price is a sore subject," says Ron. "It cost me £43,000 when used car prices were at their height. Now, with 29,000 miles on the clock, I reckon it's worth between £25,000 and £30,000."

It sounds par for the course to me, but I ask Ron if he thinks the modifications the previous owner made to the car – spacers in the wheels to push them out and the

Our cars

Flunked the test – but still going strong

BY SAM PHILLIPS

The last time you read about my 2011 Focus, it was about to undergo its annual MOT test and I was a bit apprehensive about its chances of passing. Lo and behold, it failed.

A knocking noise that had surfaced turned out to be caused by a fractured anti-roll bar linkage. I had to have it replaced with a fresh item.

The horn, which annoyingly was an aftermarket item fitted by a previous owner (it sounded like a whoopee cushion), was broken too.

A mischievous bulb in one of the headlights (possibly broken by the unit's habit of filling with water) also had to be repaired.

A few hours later, though, my fabulous Ford was back on the road. It didn't cost a ridiculous amount to put it right, either.

The car has now covered just shy of 128,000 miles, and I'm still enjoying its simplicity, relative comfort and decent economy (it averages around 43mpg).

Has it been reliable and problem-free since its MOT? Not quite. The driver's side rear tyre had a slow puncture, so I had to get it reseated, to the tune of £30. Daylight robbery, but that's tyres for you.

It's also starting to sound a bit like a Focus RS, but I'm reluctant to fork out money on a new exhaust for a car that's only worth a few grand. I will see what happens in that regard, but for now I'm going to keep on pootling around in my no-nonsense hatchback.

The nerviest day of the year for anyone who runs an old banger

SL11 LSF
TECALEMIT
TECALEMIT

Previous owner of Ron's M3 gave it a 'slammed' look

All the tech yet all the buttons too. Was this peak BMW?

> "I love its linear power delivery. Driving it is an experience, an adventure"

suspension lowered by around 10mm so the arches and the wheels are almost touching – risk cheapening it further by making it look like it has been, er, ragged.

Ron is quick to respond: "I wouldn't say that! I mean, why did you come to speak to me? Because you were drawn to this car – the way it looks, how it is different from a normal M3. It's unique!"

He's right, of course, but I was also attracted to it because I had followed Ron for the past 20 miles to his car club meeting at Caffeine & Machine's The Hut, near Petersfield in Hampshire, which I was also heading for. I didn't know Ron but was impressed with his ability to stick to speed limits – a skill that I hadn't associated with M3 drivers.

"I took it easy coming here because it's icy," explains Ron. "The road surface was bad, too, and the suspension is very firm, so I could feel every bump."

This M3 is the seventh BMW Ron has owned. He still owns a 1987 528e, an economy-oriented E28 5 Series. In addition, he has a Fiat Coupé 20v ("I'm spending some money on it to bring it up to scratch") and a choice of dailies: a Skoda Fabia and a Honda Jazz.

Naturally, of them all, the M3 is his favourite, he says: "I love the looks, the performance and its linear power delivery. Driving it is an experience, an adventure."

It's an expensive one, however. A replacement for that leaky tyre will cost Ron around £250, and he reckons the annual workshop bills are about 10% of the car's purchase price, or between £2000 and £4000. A set of ventilated brake discs and pads front and rear costs around £1750 from a specialist such as Munich Legends.

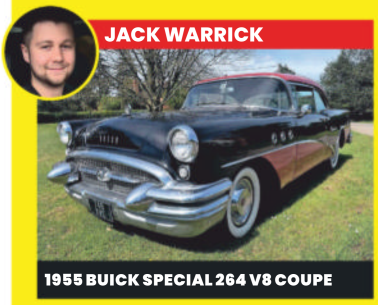
Is his M3 on borrowed time, then? "I do love it, but I also have my eye on a V8 – an 8 Series, maybe, or an M5. I might change the M3 for one of these in spring or summer."

I hope Ron likes what dealers offer him for it.

JOHN EVANS

Head to head

JACK WARRICK



1955 BUICK SPECIAL 264 V8 COUPE

VS

MURRAY SCULLION

2023 FISKER OCEAN HYPER RANGE ONE

Brief: Find an American land yacht for around £30,000

MSc I bet you weren't expecting an electric car! Sure, the Ocean was made in Austria, but Fisker was based in California and therefore as American as chlorinated chicken. Yes, it's pretty much new, but it's a land yacht for a few different reasons: it weighs two and a half tonnes and it carries an enormous financial anchor. And all for just £20k!

JW The only thing American about that Fisker is its so-called California Mode: not only was it made in Austria, but also its designer was Danish. Anyway, your redundant EV has nothing on my apple-pie, V8-engined Buick Special Coupe, which is for sale at £17,995. It's straight out of New Hampshire but it's also ULEZ-compliant. Funny old world.

MSc Fifties Americana is actually quite cool objectively. It's usually the owners who are deeply uncool, hankering for a time they weren't a part of. But I have to admit, that engine is glorious. Buick's Fireball is essentially the basis of the Rover V8, a unit I love.

JW A full repaint and rust removal means my Special is the one to go for. Yes, your Ocean is a left-field choice, with some neat technology and some party-piece features, but who will be there to help you when it all goes wrong? Certainly not Fisker…

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF 1.4 TSI SE
2009, 58,000 miles, £3990
This Golf is ideal for those after a dependable, reliable, frugal old hatch. Its 1.4-litre petrol four has plenty of shove and will return 50mpg on a motorway. Decent spec, too, with aux-in, alloys and cruise control. Service history and 12 months' MOT included.

MAZDA 3 1.8 SKYACTIV-D SPORT LUX
2019, 64,000 miles, £11,299
With its eager handling and swish interior, the 3 is a great all-round hatch. This Sport Lux diesel is comfy and packed full of quality materials, as well as phone mirroring and a reversing camera. It has a long MOT and a 12-month warranty to boot.

SEAT LEON 1.4 TSI FR
2015, 58,000 miles, £8695
Style and substance are in strong supply with this Mk3 Leon, fitted with VW's peppy 1.4-litre petrol four. It's had only two owners and comes with a full service history and 12 months' MOT. Best of all, it costs only £20 to tax annually.

HONDA CIVIC 1.0 VTEC TURBO SR
2021, 32,000 miles, £14,750
The Mk10 Civic's look divides opinion, but don't let it deter you from what is a practical hatch that's good to drive and live with. This tidy petrol SR has a full Honda history and should easily average around 45mpg.

36576

PAY Monthly
Spread the cost over
12, 24, 36, 48 or 60 months
Any mix of products over £300
19.9% APR
5 MINUTE APPLICATION

SEE OUR FULL RANGE OF 1000s OF PRODUCTS ONLINE

Machine Mart

Britain's Tools & Machinery specialist!
www.machinemart.co.uk

FRIENDLY STORES NATIONWIDE

THE PERFECT GIFT

Our gift cards & e-Vouchers can be redeemed in any of our superstores nationwide, online & by phone 0115 956 5555.

GIFT CARD
Machine Mart

£ PRICE CRASH — DON'T MISS THESE DEALS!

HIGH PRESSURE HOT WASHER

PRICE CRASH
£499.17 exc.VAT
£599.00 inc.VAT
WAS £694.80 inc.VAT
SAVE £95 inc.VAT

HARRY 2
050412181

HEAVY DUTY PETROL PRESSURE WASHER

PRICE CRASH
£415.83 exc.VAT
£499.00 inc.VAT
WAS £574.80 inc.VAT
SAVE £75 inc.VAT

PLS195B
050411362

PRESSURE WASHERS — OFFER ENDS 25/03/2025 — SEE ALL 5 PRODUCTS ONLINE NOW

ALUMINIUM RACING TROLLEY JACK

PRICE CRASH
£157.50 exc.VAT
£189.00 inc.VAT
WAS £227.98 inc.VAT
SAVE £38 inc.VAT

CTJ1800AB
020113202

LOW PROFILE TROLLEY JACK

PRICE CRASH
£45.83 exc.VAT
£55.00 inc.VAT
WAS £59.98 inc.VAT
SAVE 8% inc.VAT

CTJ2250LP
020113070

HYDRAULICS — OFFER ENDS 25/03/2025 — SEE ALL 25 PRODUCTS ONLINE NOW

3 WAYS TO CLAIM YOUR DISCOUNTS

1. IN-STORE with this voucher
2. BY PHONE 0115 956 5555 Quoting barcode No.
3. ONLINE machinemart.co.uk quoting barcode No. at checkout

8 399021 801300

For Terms, Conditions and Exclusions visit machinemart.co.uk/pages/machinemartoffers

NEW CATALOGUE

500 PAGES
OVER 1400 PRICE CUTS & NEW PRODUCTS

GET YOUR FREE COPY!

- IN-STORE
- ONLINE
- PHONE

SPRING / SUMMER CATALOGUE 2025
CALL & COLLECT SAME DAY
Machine Mart
SUPERSTORES NATIONWIDE
Britain's Tools & Machinery Specialist!
OVER 15,000 Xtra PRODUCTS ONLINE
PAY Monthly
FAST, EASY FINANCE
Over 1400
PRICE CUTS AND NEW PRODUCTS

0844 880 1265

GARAGES/WORKSHOPS

- Extra tough triple layer cover
- Heavy duty steel tubing
- Ratchet tight tensioning

BRIGHT WHITE INTERIOR

LENGTH UP TO 40′

ZIP CLOSE DOOR

CIG81220

PRICE CUT NOW FROM
£239.98 exc.VAT
£287.98 inc.VAT
WAS £298.80 inc.VAT

KEEPS THE WEATHER OUT!

Model	Dims	Order Code	exc.VAT	WAS inc.VAT	inc.VAT
CIG81212	3.6 x 3.6 x 2.5m	140613584	£239.98	£298.80	£287.98
CIG81015	4.5 x 3 x 2.4m	140613570	£276.00	£334.80	£331.20
CIG81216	4.9 x 3.7 x 2.5m	140613574	£315.00	£382.80	£378.00
CIG81020	6.1 x 3 x 2.4m	140613572	£345.00	£418.80	£414.00
CIG81220	6.1 x 3.7 x 2.5m	140613576	£385.00	£466.80	£462.00
CIG81224	7.3 x 3.7 x 2.5m	140613578	£479.00	£586.80	£574.80
CIG1432	9.7x4.3x3.65m	140613594	£1079.00	£1318.80	£1294.80
CIG1640	12x4.9x4.3m	140613596	£2398.00	£3118.80	£2877.60

MICRO JUMPSTARTS

FROM £49.98 exc.VAT
£59.98 inc.VAT

JSM1200

Model	Start Boost	Peak Boost	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
JSM600	300A	600A	010319020	£49.98	£59.98
JSM1000	500A	1000A	010319025	£59.98	£71.98
JSM1200	600A	1200A	010319030	£69.98	£83.98

BOTTLE JACK

- Tough cast iron base with screw in components
- High quality polished steel ram

5 TONNES

£24.99 exc.VAT
£29.99 inc.VAT

CBJ5B
020112012

JUMP STARTS

JS1224 JS4000

EXTRA LONG 1M LEADS

BEST SELLER

FROM £96.99 exc.VAT
£116.39 inc.VAT

HUGE RANGE IN STORE AND ONLINE

Model	Starts Engines up to	Peak Amps	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
JS1100C	3L	1100	010310015	£96.99	£116.39
JS1224LiN	6L	1200	010318905	£144.99	£173.99
JS4000	6L	2200	010311030	£164.99	£197.99
JS1224	6L	2000	010311224	£179.98	£215.98

ELECTRIC HEATERS

FROM £42.99 exc.VAT
£51.59 inc.VAT

BEST SELLER

DEVIL 7003

DEVIL 2850

Model	Voltage	Heat Output	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
Devil 2850	230V	1.4-2.8kW	010415801	£42.99	£51.59
Devil 7003	230V	1.5-3kW	010415450	£64.99	£77.99
Devil 6009	400V	4.5-9kW	010416009	£124.99	£149.99
Devil 7009	400V	4.5-9kW	010415454	£149.98	£179.98
Devil 6015	400V	5-10-15kW	010416015	£184.99	£221.99

PRO TOOL CHESTS & CABINETS

SEE ONLINE FOR OUR HUGE RANGE OF TOOL STORAGE

PRICE CUT NOW FROM
£149.98 exc.VAT
£179.98 inc.VAT
WAS £185.99 inc.VAT

BALL BEARING ROLLER DRAWERS

	Model	Description	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
1	CBB209C ‡	9 Dr Chest	070118032	£149.98	£179.98
2	CBB217C	7 Dr Cabinet	070118057	£279.00	£334.80
3	CTC1300C	13 Dr Combi	070113042	£189.98	£227.98

TURBO FAN GAS HEATERS

DUAL VOLTAGE 230& 110 VOLT — IN STOCK FROM £203.98 inc.VAT

Offering low cost, efficient heating

FROM £89.98 exc.VAT
£107.98 inc.VAT

Clarke
LITTLE DEVIL II
SPACE HEATER

LITTLE DEVIL II

PROPANE GAS FIRED

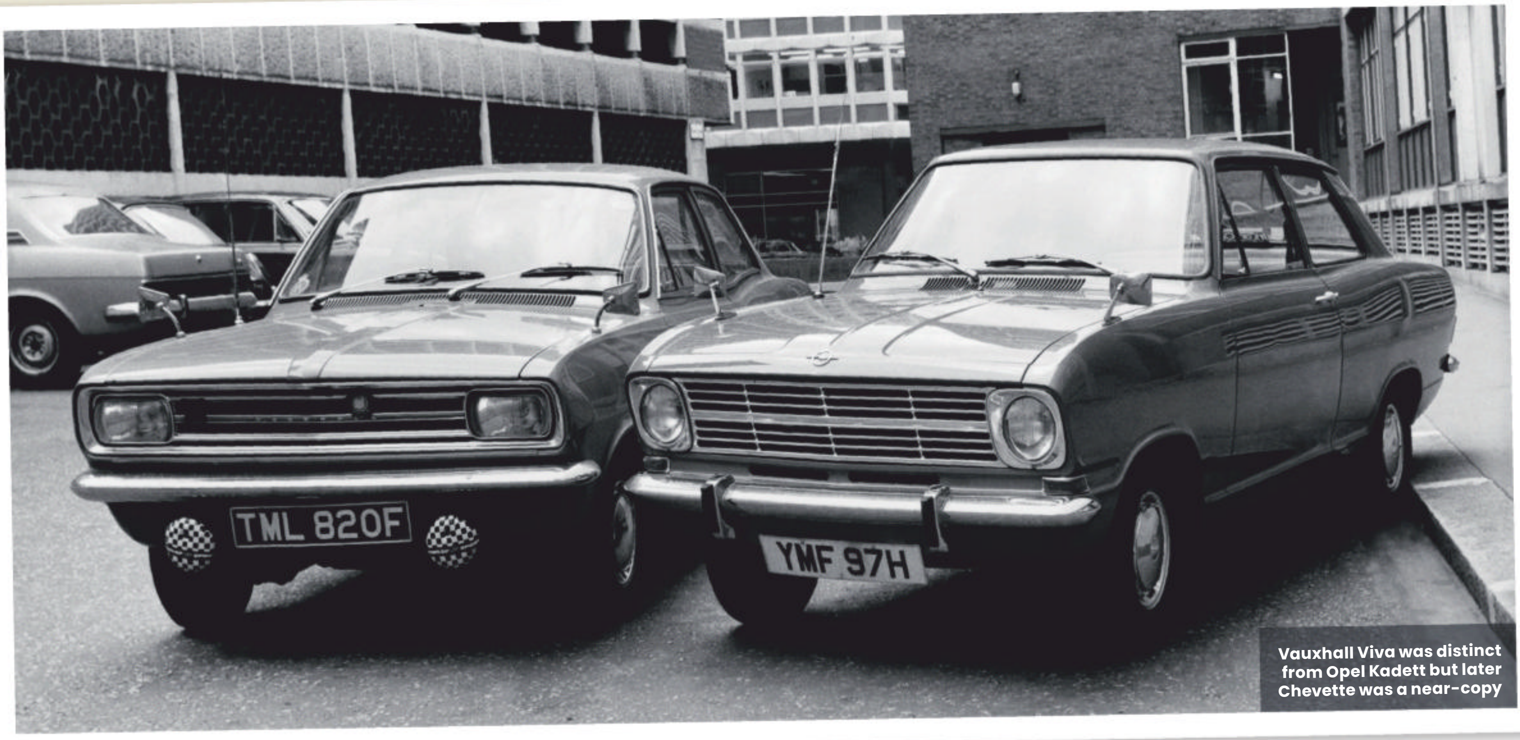
Model	Max. Output	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
Little Devil II	10.3kW	010416020	£89.98	£107.98
Devil 700	15kW	010410182	£114.99	£137.99
Devil 900	24.9kW	010410186	£169.98	£203.98
DEVIL 900DV	24.9kW	010411175	£169.98	£203.98
DEVIL1600DV	36.6kW	010411191	£199.00	£238.80
Devil 1600	36.6kW	010410190	£199.98	£239.98
Devil 2100	49.8kW	010410194	£259.98	£311.98

EASY WAYS TO BUY... — CALL & COLLECT AT STORES TODAY — CLICK & COLLECT OVER 10,500 LOCATIONS — VISIT STORES NATIONWIDE — CALL 0115 956 5555 — BROWSE machinemart.co.uk

BARNSLEY, S71 1HA	01226 732297
B'HAM GT. BARR, B43 6NR	0121 358 7977
B'HAM HAY MILLS, B25 8DA	0121 771 3433
BOLTON, BL3 6BD	01204 365799
BRADFORD, BD1 3BN	01274 390962
BRISTOL, BS5 9JJ	0117 935 1060
BURTON, DE14 3QZ	01283 564708
CAMBRIDGE, CB4 3HL	01223 322675
CARDIFF, CF24 3DN	02920 465424
CARLISLE, CA1 2LG	01228 591666
CHELTENHAM, GL52 2EH	01242 514402
CHESTER, CH1 3EY	01244 311258
COLCHESTER, CO1 1RE	01206 762831
COVENTRY, CV1 1HT	02476 224227
CROYDON, CR2 6EU	0208 763 0640
DARLINGTON, DL1 1RB	01325 380841
DEAL KENT, CT14 6BQ	01304 373434
DERBY, DE1 2ED	01332 290931
DONCASTER, DN2 4NY	01302 245999
DUNDEE, DD1 3ET	01382 225140
EDINBURGH, EH8 7BR	0131 659 5919
EXETER, EX2 8QG	01392 256744
GATESHEAD, NE8 4XA	0191 493 2520
GLASGOW, G4 9EJ	0141 332 9231
GLOUCESTER, GL1 4HY	01452 417948
GRIMSBY, DN32 9BD	01472 354435
HULL, HU9 1EG	01482 223161
ILFORD, IG2 7HU	0208 518 4286
IPSWICH, IP1 1UZ	01473 221253
LEEDS, LS4 2AS	0113 231 0400
LEICESTER, LE4 6PN	0116 261 0688
LINCOLN, LN5 8HG	01522 543036
LIVERPOOL, L3 5NF	0151 709 4484
LONDON CATFORD, SE6 3ND	0208 695 5684
LONDON EDM'TON, N18 020	0208 803 0861
LONDON LEYTON, E10 7EB	0208 558 8284
LUTON, LU4 8JS	01582 728063
MAIDSTONE, ME15 6HE	01622 769572
MC CENTRAL, M8 8DU	0161 241 1851
MC OPENSHAW, M11 1AA	0161 223 8376
MANSFIELD, NG19 7AR	01623 622160
MIDDLESBROUGH, TS17 6BZ	01642 677881
NORWICH, NR2 4LZ	01603 766402
NORTHAMPTON, NN5 5JW	01604 267840
NOTTINGHAM, NG1 1GN	0115 956 1811
PETERBOROUGH, PE1 2PE	01733 311770
PLYMOUTH, PL4 9HY	01752 254050
POOLE, BH14 9HT	01202 717913
PORTSMOUTH, P03 5EF	02392 654777
PRESTON, PR2 6BU	01772 703263
SHEFFIELD, S2 4HJ	0114 258 0831
SIDCUP, DA15 9LU	0208 3042069
SOUTHAMPTON, SO17 3SP	02380 557788
SOUTHEND, SS9 3JJ	01702 483742
STOKE-ON-TRENT, ST1 5EH	01782 287321
SUNDERLAND, SR2 9QF	0191 510 8773
SWANSEA, SA7 9AG	01792 792969
SWINDON, SN1 3AW	01793 491717
TWICKENHAM, TW1 4AW	0208 892 9117
WARRINGTON, WA2 8JP	01925 630937
WIGAN, WN5 9AU	01942 323785
WOLVERHAMPTON, WV4 6EL	01902 494186
WORCESTER, WR1 1JZ	01905 723451

Calls to the catalogue request number cost 7p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. Calls may be monitored. All prices correct at time of going to press. We reserve the right to change products and prices. All products subject to availability, E&OE.

The Autocar Lost in the archive



Vauxhall Viva was distinct from Opel Kadett but later Chevette was a near-copy

How Vauxhall lost its independence to Opel

Last week, Stellantis's UK boss reassured us that Vauxhall has a future and reaffirmed that it legitimately is a British car brand – things that executives have had to do repeatedly for the half century since it was effectively subsumed into German manufacturer Opel.

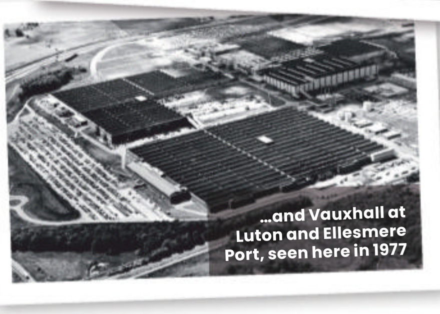
Vauxhall launched its first car in 1903, was bought by America's General Motors in 1925 and in the 1960s became the UK's third-largest car maker, with its old Luton home and new plant up at Ellesmere Port.

Opel made its first car in 1899 and became a GM subsidiary in 1929. Post-war it grew to become Germany's second-largest car maker, with a production total nearly five times higher than Vauxhall's in 1969.

Although both were owned by GM and shared parts, they were distinct from each other. Indeed, they operated in many of the same markets: Vauxhall was one of the UK's major exporters (some 83,000 cars went as far afield as Ghana, Canada and Malaysia in 1968) and Opel was permitted to make a post-war return to the UK market in 1967, as the nation negotiated its entry into the European Common Market and Brits bought ever more foreign cars, and as "GM felt that Opel products do not duplicate the Vauxhall range too markedly".

It all started to go badly wrong for Vauxhall as the 1970s dawned. Ford was dominating sales more than ever before, while the character of Luton's creations was best summed up by respected engineer Ralph Broad, who said: "How Opel can get it so right and Vauxhall can get it so wrong I shall never understand." Productivity was terrible, too: Opel was Europe's best performer in this regard, and Vauxhall was operating at just 59% of its level, losing production to rising costs and labour disputes. Although that problem was endemic: Ford in Dagenham was at 69% of Opel's level, compared with 95% in Germany, while Leyland and Chrysler were at just 44% and 41%.

Opel produced cars at Rüsselsheim, Bochum and Antwerp...



...and Vauxhall at Luton and Ellesmere Port, seen here in 1977

Naturally, Vauxhall's losses were soaring, too: from about £2 million in 1969 to almost £9.5m in 1970.

It was an easy decision for GM, then, to consolidate developmental operations in Germany.

So when the group's first global platform was ready, responsibility for European 'T-car' development went to Opel, and the 1975 Vauxhall Chevette, although made in the UK, was merely a renosed and rebadged Opel Kadett – rendering the 1972 Victor the final genuine Vauxhall.

With perhaps a hint of bitterness, we noted after Vauxhall launched a restyled Opel Ascona: "The Cavalier is not really a Vauxhall at all. But never mind. It will show on the statistics as one, although the 1972 Trade Descriptions Act requires it to have 'Made in Belgium' prominently displayed somewhere upon it."

GM Europe president John McCormack (formerly of Opel) later explained to us: "All of our research and development work for cars is now regrouped in Germany. We are in no position to create a brand-new car in Britain. But we have a small team at Vauxhall charged with adapting Opel projects to the British market."

In 1979, we reported on the result of 'Opelisation': "Vauxhall went through what might be called, to put it mildly, a bad patch. The recovery achieved in the past four years has been little short of remarkable. It has swung back from a 7.4% UK share in 1975 to 8.2% of a much-increased market last year.

"Some credit must be given for clever marketing. With still some resistance to any sort of imported car in this country, the acceptable Vauxhall name gave the advantage of concealing the origin of the cars."

Vauxhall's boss agreed, telling us in 1983: "It turned out to be a good decision. We got our act together."

But there was also regret, as Luton East MP Graham Bright had expressed in 1981: "We have lost a tremendous number of skills. Unless there is the possibility of the design and engineering returning to Britain, those skills will disappear for ever. We have also surrendered the European dealerships; Vauxhall cars are no longer permitted to be sold in Europe. Within GM, in real terms, Vauxhall has been downgraded. Britain has lost the design capability and manufacturing experience that it needs. It is sad."

KRIS CULMER

If you want to get lost in the archive...
Scan the QR code to gain access to Autocar issues from 1895 to the present day.

GETTY IMAGES

URGENTLY WANTED
NEARLY NEW CARS FOR IMMEDIATE CASH PURCHASE. STRAIGHT FORWARD DEALING FROM WINNER OF CARGURUS 2024 AWARD

SILVERSPEED

Celebrating 30 Years

Dealing in interesting number plates and cars for nearly 30 years been in this magazine for over 20 years!

Tel 07961 808069 • Email Silverspeedlondon@gmail.com

URGENTLY WANTED FOR CASH
DATELESS REGISTRATIONS AND ALL CARS
ANYTHING CONSIDERED
PLEASE CALL!!

NEW STOCK

Plate	Price
NEW RYKIY	(Ricky) £5995
NEW BEM4N	£3995
NEW SIRTT	(SirTT) £POA
NEW VYJ 100	£1,695
NEW 158A	£24,995
NEW RRRIP	£7,995
NEW LOO5H	£2,995
NEW ROL7S	£12,995
NEW ROL15S	£3,995
NEW AKB88R	£14,995
NEW MMM4M	£9,995
NEW 615NUO	£1,695
NEW A555SHA	£3995
NEW 5 DPE	£5,995
NEW 21 VE	£12,995
NEW 6 ROR	£7,995
NEW MUD 880Y	£4,995
NEW VVV7V	£6,995
NEW OOA8A	£3,595
NEW 819 JAY	£7,995
NEW 700 K	£29,995

QUIRKY RANGE

Plate	Price
AU70CAR	£6,995
RADID	£6,995
MEDI4A	£5,995

ULTIMATE INVESTMENT RANGE

Plate	Price
140C	£29,995
140X	£24,995
58V	£54,995
1 00C	£19,995
KCN 1	£19,995
1 X0X	£29,995
1 VTV	£14,995
1 VDN	£13,995

NAME RELATED PLATES

Plate	Price
MUS55A	£16,995
A115HAB	£6,995
NAD74A	£4,995
GUL74M	£4,995
N486 ELA	£4,995 (Nabella)
UDDIP	£3,995
M4X VW	£2,995
R1 EHN	£9,995

CLASSY 3X3'S

Plate	Price
333 OXU	£1,495
333 UXX	£1,495
444 XAA	£1,995
447 LBF	£1,495
RFO 447	£1,495
600 VUY	£1,995
601 DTO	£1,395
615 NUO	£1,995
PHH 618	£1,995
666VRX	£2,495
747 OYE	£2,495
101 VOY	£1,395
999 EKK	£2,995

GREAT VALUE 2X3'S

Plate	Price
10 XWE	£2,495
80 VXP	£2,495

SPECIAL INTEREST

Plate	Price
HOO600H	£1,995
MAA2A	£3,995
OCT 4V	£3,495
17SDM	£6,495
VEX50	£4,995

GREAT VALUE BARGAINS

Plate	Price
J3RRX	£1,375
R2HRO	£1,375
RO51GAY	£495

GET YOUR WEEKLY FIX

13 issues for just £37.49

CAN LEWIS WIN AT FERRARI?
AUTOCAR
NEW BABY VW
AUTOCAR ARCHIVE

Rev up your week with a subscription to Autocar, the ultimate source of automotive joy.

SAVE £27 on the shop price

CAN LEWIS WIN AT FERRARI?
FIRST FOR NEWS AND REVIEWS EVERY WEEK
AUTOCAR
THE UP IS BACK!
NEW BABY VW
It's the affordable EV you've been waiting for
HURRAH! VOLVO SAVES THE SALOON
THE EV START-UP TESLA'S AFRAID OF
RENAULT 5: SO HOW GOOD REALLY IS IT?

AUTOCAR ARCHIVE See online for all subscription packages, which now include unlimited access to the Autocar Archive

Order today at themagazineshop.com/2025PA/aca or call 0344 848 8816 quoting '2025PA'

SCAN ME TO ORDER

AUTOCAR

TERMS AND CONDITIONS This is a UK-only offer. After your first 13 issues for £37.49, your subscription will renew at £37.49 every 13 issues. For overseas offers, please visit themagazineshop.com/2025PA/aca or call +44 (0) 1604 251 450. All savings are based on the UK cover price of £4.99 and are correct as of March 2025. Please allow up to 35 days for delivery of your first issue. Direct Debit rates are valid for one year, after which they are subject to change; should prices change, we will inform you in writing. Should you wish to cancel your subscription, it will be cancelled on expiry of the current term, which will not be refundable other than in exceptional circumstances. Details of the Direct Debit Guarantee are available on request. **Offer ends 31 May 2025**

ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of the independent, objective and empirical road testing of new cars is the longest in the world. But like everything that endures, our road testing process has always moved with the times.

Until recently, it was thought that our first instrumented road test report was published on an Austin Seven in April 1928, but fresh research has lately revealed that the tradition is older still.

For more than a century, these road tests have been verifying, describing and illustrating the performance and characteristics in close detail, one new car at a time. Driving impressions have always been a key component part of them, around which other elements have changed. In early years, these test elements included benchmarking of braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later they expanded to take in acceleration, top speed and stopping distance, as well as cruising noise level. Cabin dimensions and measured weight became included too.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated state of charge. All are key indicators of the integrity of vehicle engineering in this emerging era.

Some of our road tests also include lap-time performance benchmarks where appropriate, but all are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car - and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into their findings and learn more about more than a century of road tests with a subscription to the ever-expanding digital Autocar Archive (visit themagazineshop.com/aca23ed/aca).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ABARTH

500 Esseesse ★★★★☆ 25.3.09
Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.
7.6 6.5 1135 35.8 -

500e Turismo ★★★½☆ 9.8.23
A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.
6.9 6.4 1395 - 142

595 Competizione ★★★½☆ 26.2.14
Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.
7.5 6.4 1135 39.2 -

ALFA ROMEO

Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★½ 29.3.17
Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.
4.5 3.2 1700 35.7 -

Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione
★★★½☆ 3.1.18
Spry-handling SUV is likeable, if short of the class's usual refinements.
6.8 7.0 1815 49.7 -

Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★½☆ 9.1.19
A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.
4.0 3.3 1931 31.9 -

Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD
★★★★☆ 28.6.23
Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.
5.7 5.3 1784 32.2 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ALPINE

A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18
Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.
4.7 3.8 1125 45.6 -

A110 Légende GT ★★★★½ 9.3.22
The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.
4.8 3.9 1140 40.2 -

A110 R ★★★½☆ 15.11.23
Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.
4.2 3.5 1094 39.7 -

ARIEL

Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19
Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.
3.2 2.4 680 39.2 -

ASTON MARTIN

Vantage ★★★★½ 18.9.24
Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.
3.5 2.6 1745 28.5 -

DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18
Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.
3.7 2.7 1910 25.6 -

DBX ★★★★½ 28.10.20
Does everyday driver appeal better than any other super-SUV.
4.6 3.8 2328 24.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

DBX 707 ★★★★☆ 30.11.22
A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.
3.3 2.8 2278 26.2 -

AUDI

A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★½☆ 2.10.19
Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.
7.9 8.4 1209 57.0 -

S3 Sportback ★★★½☆ 18.11.20
Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.
4.8 4.2 1552 39.0 -

RS4 Avant ★★★★☆ 14.2.18
A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.
4.0 3.5 1790 36.7 -

S4 TDI ★★★★☆ 18.9.19
Diesel power sparks an appealingly different identity for this fast Audi.
4.6 4.1 1871 54.3 -

S5 Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 15.1.25
Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.
4.1 3.8 2027 33.7 -

A5 Sportback 2.0 TFSI 252PS Quattro S Line S Tronic ★★★½☆ 8.3.17
Sleek mid-sized executive fastback is still short of a selling point beyond its style.
5.7 5.3 1535 41.1 -

A6 Avant 40 TDI S Line S Tronic
★★★★☆ 14.11.18
High-tech throwback is a timely reminder of what Audi does best.
8.4 7.5 1710 50.1 -

RS6 Avant GT ★★★★☆ 5.2.25
Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.
3.2 2.7 2144 26.3 -

A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line
★★★★☆ 5.1.22
Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.
5.7 5.2 2077 45.4 34

A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport
★★★½☆ 11.7.18
Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.
5.8 5.3 1880 53.1 -

A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport
★★★½☆ 17.6.20
Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.
- - 2330 - -

E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★½ 26.6.19
A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.
5.4 4.2 2569 - 218

E-tron S Quattro ★★★½☆ 2.6.21
A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.
4.2 3.6 2643 - -

Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport ★★★½☆ 9.11.16
Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.
8.1 8.2 1316 - -

SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★☆ 20.3.19
More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.
4.5 4.1 1530 34.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★½☆ 7.7.21
Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.
8.1 7.8 2112 - -

Q5 2.0 TDI 190PS Quattro S Line S Tronic
★★★★☆ 15.3.17
Like the previous Q5 but with additional class, dynamism and polish.
8.3 8.5 1770 42.5 -

SQ5 TSI Quattro ★★★½☆ 21.6.17
Mid-sized performance SUV bites off more than it can chew.
5.5 5.0 1870 32.6 -

SQ5 Sportback TDI Quattro
★★★½☆ 3.8.22
Not the sharpest fast SUV, but the real-world appeal is clear to see.
5.1 4.6 2023 49.0 -

Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1
★★★½☆ 2.10.24
EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.
5.3 4.3 – 2.8 247

Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 12.8.15
Chiselled, plush, suave and spacious. Only so-so to drive, though.
6.2 6.2 2245 - -

SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★½ 26.10.16
A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.
5.1 4.5 2330 37.9 -

Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★☆ 26.9.18
Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.
6.9 6.7 2285 40.1 -

R8 V10 Plus ★★★★☆ 30.12.15
Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.
3.1 2.6 1730 - -

BENTLEY

Bentayga W12 ★★★★½ 18.5.16
Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.
4.9 4.4 2440 - -

Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline
★★★★☆ 24.4.24
Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.
4.4 3.8 2600 25.6 -

Continental GT W12 First Edition
★★★★½ 2.5.18
Superb luxury coupé has added dynamism but not enough to top the class.
3.6 2.9 2295 26.4 -

Continental GT Speed ★★★★☆ 22.12.21
Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.
3.4 2.7 2279 22.0 -

Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★½ 19.4.23
Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.
3.6 3.2 2295 29.1 -

Flying Spur W12 ★★★★½ 15.7.20
Trounces rivals for driver appeal but not in every way that matters.
3.9 3.2 2500 32.5 -

Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner
★★★★½ 17.8.22
Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.
4.4 3.9 2596 30.1 28

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

BMW

120 M Sport ★★★⯪☆ **31.12.24**
Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.
7.3 6.8 1489 45.8 -

218i M Sport Gran Coupé
★★★☆☆ **8.4.20**
Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.
8.8 8.4 1375 58.2 -

220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★☆ **1.6.22**
A good coupé rather than a great sports car.
7.3 7.3 1546 46.8 -

M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★⯪ **12.7.23**
Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.
4.5 3.8 1687 32.1 -

320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★ **15.5.19**
BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.
6.9 6.8 1639 63.3 -

330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★⯪ **15.1.20**
An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.
5.5 5.2 1922 52.6 -

330e M Sport ★★★★⯪ **1.7.20**
Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.
- - 1740 - -

M440i xDrive ★★★★☆ **6.1.21**
A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.
4.1 3.7 1775 44.0 -

M4 Competition ★★★★⯪ **21.4.21**
A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.
3.9 2.9 1800 32.7 -

i4 M50 ★★★★☆ **19.1.22**
Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.
4.1 3.2 2248 - 186

M4 CSL ★★★★☆ **16.11.22**
A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.
3.6 2.7 1625 31.1 -

M5 ★★★⯪☆ **29.1.25**
A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.
3.5 2.8 2373 27.3 35

i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★⯪☆ **29.11.23**
Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.
5.4 4.4 2213 - 235

550e xDrive M Sport Pro
★★★★☆ **3.4.24**
Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.
4.4 3.5 2232 40.1 47

i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★⯪ **15.2.23**
It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.
4.5 3.4 2758 - 264

840d xDrive ★★★★☆ **16.1.19**
A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.
5.0 4.6 1901 49.2 -

M8 Competition Convertible
★★★⯪☆ **5.2.20**
Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.
3.3 2.7 2020 31.6 -

M8 Competition ★★★⯪☆ **3.6.20**
Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.
- - 1960 - -

X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★⯪☆ **25.1.23**
A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.
6.4 6.0 1800 45.6 -

X4 M Competition ★★★☆☆ **13.11.19**
Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.
4.0 3.3 2028 29.0 -

X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★☆ **2.1.19**
Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.
6.6 6.6 2279 43.1 -

X6 M Competition ★★★☆☆ **20.3.24**
Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.
3.5 3.1 2442 29.3 -

X7 M50i M Performance xDrive
★★★★☆ **9.9.20**
Stunningly large and enviably refined but too excessive for many.
4.8 3.9 2583 30.5 -

X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★☆ **29.3.23**
Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.
4.2 3.7 2600 28.9 -

iX xDrive50 M Sport ★★★★⯪ **2.3.22**
Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.
4.4 3.4 2593 - 252

Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack
★★★★☆ **21.8.24**
Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.
5.7 5.9 1561 36.9 -

BMW ALPINA

B3 GT Touring ★★★★⯪ **15.1.25**
Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.
3.3 2.7 1910 29.4 -

B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★☆ **22.9.21**
Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.
3.5 2.8 2100 - -

BYD

Atto 3 Design ★★★☆☆ **31.5.23**
Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.
7.0 6.2 1787 - 201

Seal Design ★★★⯪☆ **17.1.24**
Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.
5.8 4.7 2116 - 279

CATERHAM

Seven 160 ★★★★☆ **20.11.13**
Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.
8.4 8.7 510 44.8 -

Seven 620S ★★★★⯪ **9.3.16**
Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.
3.8 4.2 650 29.5 -

Seven 420 Cup ★★★★⯪ **31.8.22**
Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.
4.2 3.4 560 35.3 -

CHEVROLET

Corvette 3LT ★★★★☆ **22.6.22**
Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.
3.9 3.2 1679 32.9 -

Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★☆ **16.8.23**
Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.
3.1 2.4 1670 26.1 -

CITROEN

Ami Colour ★★⯪☆☆ **11.1.23**
Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.
- - 471 - 39

C3 Puretech 110 Flair ★★★⯪☆ **28.12.16**
Dynamically challenged, but a cheery design makes this supermini interesting.
9.6 9.4 1050 62.3 -

C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair
★★★⯪☆ **7.3.18**
Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.
11.5 10.7 1159 39.5 -

C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto
★★★☆☆ **26.5.21**
Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.
9.5 9.2 1320 56.4 -

ë-C4 X Shine ★★★⯪☆ **3.5.23**
EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.
9.7 8.8 1623 - 162

C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus
★★★⯪☆ **13.2.19**
Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.
9.0 8.5 1540 47.8 -

C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus
★★★★☆ **28.9.22**
Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.
7.8 7.1 1502 47.8 -

CUPRA

Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★⯪☆ **6.7.22**
As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.
6.7 6.2 1794 - 220

Born VZ First Edition ★★★★☆ **9.10.24**
An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.
5.4 4.2 1996 3.5 269

Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★☆ **8.9.21**
Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.
4.9 4.3 1707 40.1 -

Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★☆ **27.7.22**
Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.
5.9 4.7 1468 43.4 -

Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★⯪☆ **23.1.19**
Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.
4.9 4.4 1615 36.7 -

Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG
★★★★⯪ **3.2.21**
Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.
5.1 4.3 1583 36.4 -

Tavascan V1 ★★★☆☆ **5.2.25**
Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.
6.0 5.0 2129 3.2 246

DACIA

Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige
★★★★☆ **28.4.21**
Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.
11.9 11.9 1096 54.1 -

Duster SCe 115 4x2 Comfort
★★★★☆ **22.8.18**
Comfortable, simple SUV keeps its budget family motoring star quality.
13.1 12.6 1286 42.2 -

Duster Hybrid 140 Journey
★★★★⯪ **27.11.24**
Notably improved yet barely any pricier.
9.7 8.7 1413 40.2 -

Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★⯪ **20.4.22**
Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.
11.0 11.0 1267 48.5 -

DS

3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige
★★★☆☆ **10.7.19**
No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.
8.8 8.3 1205 48.6 -

4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+
★★★⯪☆ **29.6.22**
High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.
7.4 6.0 1706 44.7 26

7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige
★★★⯪☆ **19.9.18**
DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.
8.6 7.0 1616 44.6 -

7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première
★★★⯪☆ **26.4.23**
More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.
5.7 4.6 1956 36.6 29

9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus
★★★⯪☆ **2.2.22**
Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.
8.6 7.1 1886 44.7 20

FERRARI

296 GTB ★★★★★ **21.12.22**
Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.
2.7 1.9 1648 37.8 15

SF90 Stradale ★★★★☆ **3.11.21**
Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.
2.5 1.8 1698 24.4 16

FIAT

Panda 1.2 Easy ★★★★⯪ **25.4.12**
Was everything a city car ought to be but is now way past its prime.
14.6 15.6 1020 49.1 -

Panda 4x4 Twinair ★★★★☆ **17.4.13**
A lovable four-wheel-drive miniature that trades space for style and charm.
14.6 15.8 1195 44.2 -

500 1.4 Lounge ★★★★☆ **19.9.07**
Enjoyable city car with the substance to back up its style.
10.3 10.4 1065 42.8 -

500C 1.2 Pop ★★★★☆ **5.8.09**
Landaulet hits the spot every bit as well as the regular hatchback and is often better.
13.2 14.4 1035 48.3 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

500 Twinair Lounge ★★★½☆ 24.11.10
Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.
11.7 13.0 1070 42.1 -

500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★☆ 26.1.22
More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.
8.1 7.7 1365 - 142

600e La Prima ★★★½☆ 27.3.24
Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.
8.8 7.7 1587 - 173

FORD

Fiesta 1.0 Ecoboost 125PS Titanium ★★★★½ 9.8.17
A dynamically brilliant supermini but no longer the best one.
6.6 7.8 1218 48.2 -

Fiesta ST ★★★★½ 15.8.18
Great to drive and supreme value but not better than before in all aspects.
6.6 7.8 1218 48.2 -

Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★½ 20.2.19
Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.
8.9 7.8 1417 43.8 -

Focus ST ★★★★☆ 11.9.19
Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.
6.1 4.9 1433 40.7 -

Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium ★★★★½ 25.3.20
The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.
10.0 9.6 1260 50.0 -

Puma ST ★★★★☆ 24.3.21
Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.
7.2 6.2 1301 41.5 -

Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD ★★★½☆ 23.10.24
Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.
5.8 4.8 2067 2.9 262

Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line ★★★½☆ 24.6.20
Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.
- - 1844 - -

Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD ★★★★☆ 23.6.21
Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.
6.8 5.6 2130 - -

Mustang Mach-E GT AWD ★★★☆☆ 27.4.22
Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.
4.2 3.5 2298 - -

Mustang Dark Horse ★★★½☆ 20.11.24
Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.
4.5 3.5 1853 26.1 -

Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium ★★★½☆ 10.7.24
Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.
10.8 10.6 1426 47.4 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited ★★★★☆ 8.5.24
Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.
12.1 11.8 1971 38.8 -

Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak ★★★★½ 14.6.23
Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.
9.8 9.9 2348 36.6 -

F-150 Lightning Platinum ★★★½☆ 17.5.23
Electric truck has huge utility and appealing range, but its size and price will put many off.
4.5 3.7 3121 - 288

GENESIS

G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line ★★★½☆ 10.11.21
Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.
7.2 6.7 1751 60.4 -

Electrified G80 ★★★½☆ 12.10.22
Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.
4.4 4.0 2349 - 272

GV60 Sport Plus ★★★★☆ 24.8.22
Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.
3.8 3.1 2192 - 220

GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater ★★★½☆ 15.9.21
Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.
6.7 6.6 2217 45.0 -

GWM ORA

Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition ★★½☆☆ 1.2.23
Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.
7.7 7.2 1580 - 154

HONDA

E Advance ★★★½☆ 26.8.20
More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.
7.9 - 1535 - 110

Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX ★★★½☆ 7.10.20
Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.
9.6 10.0 1248 57.0 -

Civic Type R GT ★★★★½ 25.10.17
Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.
5.7 7.1 1400 57.0 -

HR-V e:HEV Advance Style ★★★½☆ 24.11.21
Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.
9.2 9.3 1397 43.2 -

e:Ny1 Advance ★★★☆☆ 1.11.23
EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.
8.6 6.9 1756 - 211

HYUNDAI

i10 1.2 MPi Premium ★★★★☆ 15.4.20
Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.
12.3 12.9 999 52.5 -

i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect ★★★½☆ 24.2.21
Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.
9.7 10.1 1065 63.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

i20 N ★★★★½ 25.8.21
N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.
6.1 5.4 1231 50.6 -

i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE ★★★½☆ 13.9.17
Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.
9.5 9.7 1425 48.9 -

i30 N Performance ★★★½☆ 28.12.17
Hyundai's first hot hatch attempt is fast and full-blooded with rough edges.
6.4 5.6 1478 43.1 -

Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate ★★★½☆ 7.6.23
Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.
7.2 6.2 2006 - 272

Kona 1.0 120PS Advance ★★★★☆ 6.9.23
Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.
10.4 10.3 1352 50.4 -

Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium ★★★★☆ 17.3.21
Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.
7.6 6.2 1612 47.7 -

Ioniq 5 N ★★★★★ 7.8.24
A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.
3.5 2.7 2221 - 224

Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium ★★★★☆ 16.10.24
A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.
7.9 7.5 2007 32.9 -

Nexo ★★★½☆ 12.6.19
Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.
9.6 9.7 1852 - -

INEOS

Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster ★★★½☆ 20.9.23
Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.
8.0 8.1 2682 20.9 -

JAGUAR

XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport ★★★★½ 1.7.15
Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.
7.6 6.7 1530 48.7 -

XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD ★★★½☆ 17.4.19
Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.
6.6 6.2 1727 36.8 -

E-Pace D180 AWD SE ★★★½☆ 11.4.18
Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.
9.9 10.5 1768 49.2 -

I-Pace EV400 S ★★★★½ 12.9.18
Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.
4.5 3.5 2236 - -

F-Pace SVR ★★★★½ 24.7.19
Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.
4.1 3.5 2070 29.4 -

F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★½ 1.12.21
Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.
5.1 4.6 2264 - 24

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

F-Type V8 S Convertible ★★★★☆ 12.6.13
As good to drive as it is to behold – but at a material and financial cost.
4.0 3.4 1810 28.5 -

F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé ★★★★☆ 29.4.20
The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.
- - 1743 - -

JEEP

Avenger Electric Summit ★★★½☆ 24.1.24
Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.
8.3 6.9 1601 - 172

Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆ 3.10.18
Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.
11.0 11.5 1540 44.8 -

Compass 4xe S ★★★☆☆ 16.2.22
Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.
6.4 5.7 1872 46.9 22

Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆ 28.10.15
Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.
10.8 11.2 1502 52.6 -

Renegade 4xe Trailhawk ★★★☆☆ 30.6.21
Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.
6.7 5.6 1816 39.4 21

TOP 3

BEST DRIVER'S CARS

1 McLaren Artura

2 Analogue Supersport

3 Aston Martin Vantage

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

2003 PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO

Porsche makes its extremely controversial SUV debut with range-topping Turbo monster. “The most accomplished car ever? Close. On-road performance is so far ahead of its rivals it almost seems unfair to make the comparison.”

Price £69,715
Engine V8, 4511cc, twin-turbo, petrol
Power 444bhp at 6000rpm
Torque 457lb ft at 2250-4750rpm
Weight 2355kg
0-60mph 5.4sec
0-100mph 12.9sec
Top speed 158mph
Economy 16.2mpg

1955 MERCEDES 300 SL

Competition coupé becomes “a most astonishing” road car. “Docile and tractable” in town, then makes one feel “as though he is being rocketed through space” on an open road and “goes round corners firmly on the proverbial rails”, yet ride and refinement are also good.

Price £4393
Engine 6 cyls in line, 2996cc, petrol
Power 240bhp at 6100rpm
Torque 217lb ft at 4800rpm
Weight 1450kg
0-60mph 8.8sec
0-100mph 21.0sec
Top speed 135mph
Economy 18.4mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland	★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-

KGM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto	★★★☆☆	14.9.16	Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.	12.0	12.6	1469	-	-

KIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★½☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-
Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2	★★★★☆	29.8.18	Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.	9.9	9.6	1411	70.3	-
Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S	★★★½☆	27.2.19	Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.	9.5	8.9	1475	42.6	-
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition	★★★½☆	20.11.19	Looks good and drives well but lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban	★★★½☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling but not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★½☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won’t hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was but still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	–	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★½☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★½☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, but its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220

LAMBORGHINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Huracán Performante	★★★★½	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★½	20.5.20	Finest driver’s car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★½	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy’s latest ‘mostro’ has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-

LAND ROVER

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★½	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★½	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★½☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★½	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★½	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★½☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★½	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-

LEXUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★½☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, but not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★½☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★½☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
LS 500h Premier	★★★☆☆	6.6.18	Limo has never been more appealing or less competitive in key areas.	5.9	5.3	2404	42.2	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★½☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-

LOTUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Eletre R	★★★½☆	24.7.24	There’s plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216

MASERATI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghibli Diesel	★★★½☆	12.3.14	Saloon isn’t lacking in style but is a little short on substance.	6.5	6.0	2040	40.4	-
Grecale Trofeo	★★★½☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante Diesel	★★★☆☆	30.11.16	A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.	6.8	6.9	2205	41.5	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★½☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class’s curate’s egg but can’t redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★½☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-

MAZDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★½☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★½☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-

---

*For three weeks from publication date

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★½	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-

McLAREN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
720S	★★★★★	24.5.17	Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-
750S	★★★★☆	19.6.24	McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.	2.9	2.0	1412	28.8	-
Artura	★★★★½	19.10.22	Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.	3.2	2.1	1552	32.9	17
Artura Spider	★★★★½	6.11.24	Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.	3.1	2.2	1618	27.2	17
GT	★★★½☆	27.1.21	Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.	3.3	2.3	1580	34.2	

MERCEDES-AMG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A45 S 4Matic+ Plus	★★★★½	4.3.20	AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.	4.1	3.3	1661	41.5	-
C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate	★★★☆☆	31.7.24	Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.	3.3	2.8	2217	27.1	7.1
GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé	★★★★½	13.3.19	AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.	3.3	2.7	2135	30.1	-
GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé	★★★½☆	21.6.23	Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.	2.9	2.5	2339	23.9	6
EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition	★★★★☆	8.6.22	Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.	3.6	2.8	2673	-	259
S63 E Performance Night Edition	★★★★☆	2.10.24	Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.	3.5	2.7	2666	26.1	-
GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	14.10.20	Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.	5.4	4.9	2471	29.4	-
SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	26.7.23	Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.	3.5	2.8	1939	26.2	-
GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé	★★★½☆	14.8.24	Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.	3.1	2.7	1972	30.7	-

MERCEDES-BENZ

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A200 AMG Line Executive	★★★★☆	24.5.23	Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.	7.8	7.3	1396	59.3	-
A250e AMG Line Premium	★★★☆☆	5.8.20	Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.	6.7	5.4	1665	57.8	-
B180 Sport	★★★★☆	3.4.19	In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.	8.4	8.3	1405	51.3	-
CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	21.8.19	Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.	6.8	6.1	1555	48.3	-
C300e AMG Line	★★★★½	4.5.22	Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.	5.8	5.1	2005	49.0	48
E220d AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	3.1.24	An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.	7.2	5.9	1917	65.8	-
E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus	★★★★½	19.3.25	Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.	4.9	4.3	2167	46.1	-
EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	4.1.23	Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.	6.0	5.5	2386	-	262
EQS 450 Business Class SUV	★★★½☆	6.3.24	Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.	5.5	5.2	2899	-	265
S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive	★★★★½	6.4.22	Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.	5.2	4.2	2530	37.0	45
EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	17.11.21	Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.	8.4	7.6	2030	-	200
GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	16.9.20	Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.	7.4	7.1	1810	55.4	-
EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	18.5.22	A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.	7.7	6.8	2235	-	-
GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	13.9.23	Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.	6.5	6.0	1929	41.2	-
GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	12.2.20	Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.	6.5	6.0	2634	38.2	-
G350d AMG Line	★★★★☆	17.7.19	Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.	7.5	7.2	2451	31.3	-
G500 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	25.9.24	Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.	5.1	4.5	–	30.7	-
CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.	6.1	5.5	2122	37.1	49

MG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★½☆	12.6.24	Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.	6.8	6.2	1311	47.9	-
4 EV Long Range SE	★★★★☆	5.4.23	Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.	7.1	6.1	1692	-	185
5 SW EV Exclusive	★★★½☆	25.11.20	MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.	8.0	7.1	1538	-	161
ZS EV Exclusive	★★★☆☆	4.12.19	Practical, affordable MG fails to truly move the game on.	8.9	8.0	1556	-	113
ZS Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★☆☆	22.1.25	Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.	7.6	6.6	1422	41.5	-

MINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Countryman C Exclusive	★★★½☆	17.4.24	Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.	8.7	7.7	1618	46.9	-
Aceman SE Exclusive	★★★½☆	8.1.25	Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.	6.8	5.7	1756	3.1	162

MORGAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Plus Four	★★★½☆	12.8.20	Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.	5.1	4.3	1013	54.0	-
Plus Six	★★★★☆	10.4.24	The individualist's sports car made better.	4.4	3.3	1188	37.2	-
Super 3	★★★★½	9.11.22	Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.	6.9	5.9	644	43.5	-

NISSAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna	★★★½☆	29.1.20	Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.	11.9	11.8	1256	46.0	-
Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna	★★★★☆	28.7.21	Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.	10.0	9.3	1412	44.9	-
Ariya 87kWh Evolve	★★★½☆	26.10.22	Surprisingly traditional and luxurious but not wholly successful.	8.2	6.4	2109	-	-
X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna	★★★★☆	22.2.23	Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.	6.6	6.0	1947	33.8	-

OMODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
5 1.6 TGDI Comfort	★★½☆☆	20.11.24	Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.	7.4	6.3	1474	38.2	-

PEUGEOT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-208 Allure Premium	★★★★☆	6.5.20	Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV	-	-	1455	38.2	-
308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT	★★★★☆	25.5.22	A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.	9.5	9.2	1358	55.3	-
408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8	★★★★☆	11.10.23	Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.	8.2	7.3	1746	42.1	40
508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto	★★★★☆	24.10.18	Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.	8.8	8.5	1671	52.0	-
508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8	★★★★☆	8.7.20	This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.	-	-	1720	-	-

TOP 3

BEST ELECTRIC SUVs

1 Skoda Enyaq

2 Kia EV9

3 Polestar 3

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE ★★★★☆ 5.5.21 Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.	5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-
e-2008 GT Line ★★★⯪☆ 30.9.20 Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
3008 1.6 BlueHDi 120 GT Line ★★★⯪☆ 18.1.17 In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.	12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure ★★★⯪☆ 4.8.24 Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT ★★★☆☆ 12.2.25 Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-
POLESTAR					
2 BST Edition 270 ★★★⯪☆ 12.4.23 A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 12.2.25 Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235
PORSCHE					
718 Boxster ★★★★⯪ 8.6.16 Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S ★★★★⯪ 10.8.16 Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Spyder ★★★★⯪ 1.4.20 Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.	4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS ★★★★★ 14.9.22 A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 GT3 PDK ★★★★⯪ 11.8.21 Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 Turbo S ★★★★⯪ 10.8.22 Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 Carrera T ★★★★☆ 30.8.23 Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 GT3 RS ★★★★⯪ 22.11.23 Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar ★★★★☆ 10.1.24 Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T ★★★★★ 3.7.24 Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
911 Carrera GTS ★★★★⯪ 5.3.25 Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
Macan Turbo ★★★★⯪ 4.6.14 Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.	4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-
Macan Turbo Electric ★★★⯪☆ 19.2.25 Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219
Cayenne S ★★★★⯪ 21.2.24 Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo ★★★★☆ 5.9.18 As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid ★★★⯪☆ 27.5.20 Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé ★★★★☆ 20.7.22 Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid ★★★★☆ 22.1.25 Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S ★★★★⯪ 30.10.24 Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233
RENAULT					
Clio TCe 100 Iconic ★★★★⯪ 27.11.19 Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
5 ★★★★⯪ 12.3.25 Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Mégane E-Tech Techno ★★★⯪☆ 23.11.22 Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC ★★★⯪☆ 18.3.20 Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition ★★★⯪☆ 13.10.21 Showy styling clothes an eminently sensible but unspectacular car.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range ★★★★☆ 26.6.24 The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine ★★★⯪☆ 19.7.23 Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-
ROLLS-ROYCE					
Ghost ★★★★⯪ 13.1.21 Most technologically advanced Rolls-Royce is an exceptional limo.	4.7	3.8	2490	28.5	-
Phantom ★★★★★ 4.4.18 The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre ★★★★⯪ 20.12.23 Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge ★★★★☆ 19.2.20 Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-
SEAT					
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★⯪ 19.7.17 Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR ★★★⯪☆ 2.12.20 Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★☆ 15.11.17 Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG ★★★☆☆ 25.10.23 Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-
SKODA					
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort ★★★★⯪ 9.2.22 Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG ★★★⯪☆ 31.7.19 Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG ★★★★☆ 2.9.20 Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS ★★★★☆ 29.1.25 A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	–	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate ★★★★★ 17.7.24 The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout ★★★⯪☆ 30.1.19 Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition ★★★★⯪ 19.3.25 Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge ★★★★☆ 18.8.21 Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262
SMART					
#1 Premium ★★★⯪☆ 8.11.23 Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium ★★★⯪☆ 15.5.24 Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205
SUBARU					
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring ★★★⯪☆ 28.2.24 Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring ★★★⯪☆ 27.9.23 A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring ★★★☆☆ 15.3.23 A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169
SUZUKI					
Vitara 1.6 SZ5 ★★★⯪☆ 29.4.15 The Vitara is solidly built in Suzuki's image – and that's fine with us.	9.5	9.5	1124	-	-
SX4 S-Cross 1.6 DDiS SZ4 ★★★⯪☆ 30.10.13 Quietly capable in most respects and remarkable for its parsimony.	10.0	10.1	1305	67.5	-

TOP 3

BEST-VALUE USED CARS

1 Ford Puma

2 BMW 3 Series

3 Mazda MX-5

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★⯪	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TESLA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156
Model 3 Long Range	★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range AWD	★★★★☆	23.3.22	A far better electric car than a premium SUV.	4.7	3.6	1978	-	234
Model S P90D	★★★★⯪	20.4.16	Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid	★★★⯪☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D	★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition	★★★⯪☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design	★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack	★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports	★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
bZ4X AWD Vision	★★★⯪☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Mirai Design Premium	★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro	★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport	★★★⯪☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto	★★★⯪☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line	★★★⯪☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite	★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto	★★★⯪☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav	★★★☆☆	22.4.20	Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.	-	-	1800	-	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy	★★★⯪☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE	★★★★⯪	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+	★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG	★★★★⯪	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style	★★★★⯪	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI	★★★⯪☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	–	47.2	-
Golf R	★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life	★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line	★★★⯪☆	27.9.17	Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.	6.5	6.2	1866	55.6	-
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake	★★★⯪☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match	★★★★⯪	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG	★★★★⯪	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG	★★⯪☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line	★★★⯪☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max	★★★⯪☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech	★★★⯪☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance	★★★⯪☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG	★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style	★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro	★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600	★★★⯪☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB	★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sister car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus	★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate	★★★⯪☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition	★★★★⯪	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger brothers, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 D4 AWD R-Design	★★★⯪☆	5.7.17	The right product at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.	8.9	8.9	1836	48.9	-
XC90 D5 AWD Momentum	★★★★☆	17.6.15	A very impressive all-rounder with its own distinctive appeal.	8.3	8.3	2076	-	-
V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto	★★★★☆	27.6.18	Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.	8.9	8.3	1669	43.1	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★⯪	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★⯪	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range	★★★⯪☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Fiat Grande Panda April
Cute new crossover stays true to Giugiaro's 1980 original.

Kia EV6 GT June
Porsche Taycan rival zhuzhed up with Ioniq 5 N's powertrain.

DS N°7 November
Styling and tech updates for renamed plush family SUV.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love... SUPER TAIKYU

BY CHARLIE MARTIN

Think of endurance racing and your mind probably turns to the World Endurance Championship, in which bespoke hypercars rub wings with some of the world's ultimate sports cars.

It makes for stellar viewing but, given the sheer cost and complexity of the cars involved, can feel a bit samey once you've followed it for a couple of years. It's pretty much a given that a Porsche, Toyota or Ferrari will win overall, while the GT3 class is a toss-up between Porsche (again) and BMW. Plus, the professionalism on display around the paddock matches – and maybe even exceeds – that in Formula 1, which can make it all feel a bit cold.

The antidote is Japan's Super Taikyu series, a pro-am championship aimed at attracting all comers from around the country. It has a whopping eight classes and 56 cars out on track at once, covering everything from your common-or-garden Honda Jazz right the way up to Toyota GR Yarises and Mercedes-AMG GT3s. A few cult classics are sprinkled throughout the grid too: my favourite is the pair of modded Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs that run in the ST-2 class against the GRs and Type Rs.

The gulf in pace between the front and back of the grid, both in terms of mechanical potency and the skill of the drivers, is massive, so there's never a dull moment. It isn't uncommon to see such absurdities as a Nissan GT-R trying to pass a Porsche Cayman trying to pass a Honda Civic trying to pass a Jazz, all through the same bend. It often goes well but doesn't always, then all hell breaks loose.

Organised bedlam is the order of the day. Sanitised racing be damned

But it isn't just the novelty of the line-up that makes Super Taikyu genuinely interesting. It's also an unexpected technical hotbed, with the ST-Q class hosting various manufacturers' latest experiments. The current focus is on sustainable fuels: there's a hydrogen-combustion Toyota GR Corolla, a biodiesel-fuelled Mazda 3 and a Mazda MX-5, a Toyota GR86, a Subaru WRX and a Honda Civic Type R all burning carbon-neutral petrol.

> **"It has a whopping eight classes and 56 cars on track at once"**

There's a wild variety of cars, and it's not all Japanese

Cars running in the ST-Q class aren't awarded points, the focus instead being on putting each of their innovations to the ultimate test, but still get involved in a bit of friendly competition.

You also see some big names taking part – Toyota chairman Akio Toyoda most notably, taking the helm of the GR Corolla.

The calendar ensures that any such innovations are properly tested: a four-hour season opener at Sportsland Sugo is followed by a 24-hour race at Fuji Speedway and then five hours at Autopolis.

It may only be a seven-round season, but I would wager that manufacturers learn about as much as they would fielding a vastly more expensive WEC effort.

As much as anything else, it's the road relevance that stokes my love of Super Taikyu. Not only is it great fun – with some of the most passionate fans and competitors on the planet – but it's also helping to keep combustion engines around a little longer. For that I am grateful.

What we did this week

ROLLING OFF THE LINE

I unearthed big news while in Wolfsburg for the Volkswagen Group media conference: the firm set a new sales record... for currywurst. Around 8.5 million sausages were sold last year, in part attributed to new variants such as a short-wheelbase, performance-honed hot dog. And forget affordable EVs: the firm has promised another 'currywurst coup' is in the works. **JAMES ATTWOOD**

A HIRE POWER

Welcome to the latest round of 'or equivalent' hire car bingo. Having booked a boggo Mercedes-Benz A-Class for a week of skiing, upon my arrival at Geneva airport I was told they were all out. Instead, an apologetic rep handed me the keys to a BMW M135i xDrive. The apology was duly accepted and my sprints up various French Alpine passes tangibly improved. **WILL RIMELL**

LIFE BEFORE LIDAR

On the eve of the recent Volvo ES90 unveiling in Stockholm, I'd asked Volvo executives if they made enough of the firm's nearly 100-year history. In typically Scandi style, they were humble and unboastful. The prominent appearance of this immaculate 780 coupé at the event the next day answered my question. **MARK TISSHAW**

FREE CALENDAR
CLASSIC AND SPORTSCAR
WHY YOU still CAN'T BEAT A MINI COOPER
DAIMLER DART California wreck to British beauty
QUEST FOR THE ULTIMATE SPORTSCAR
FROM 10 GREATS WE PICK A WINNER
WIN £10,000 WORTH OF MODELS
BEST DRIVERS' CARS EVER
John Surtees tests the top 10 and picks the
40 PAGE SUPPLEMENT
MKII Jaguar & Citroën DS at war
Elans: why owners love them
BUMPER 316-PAGE COLLECTOR'S ANNIVERSARY EDITION
CLASSIC & SPORTS CAR
BRITAIN'S FASTEST CARS
DRIVING THE TESTA ROSSA FERRARI
LOTUS ELAN PROFILE
STIRLING MOSS: WHY DID I CRASH?
FIFTIES FASHION: SAPPHIRE v Mk VII
FIRST ISSUE INCORPORATING Old Motor
BATMOBILE! WE'VE SEEN IT! AND DRIVEN IT!
SUPERB 35-PAGE SUPPLEMENT
SUPERCARS
Derek Bell drives the ultimate cars in the greatest track test ever
Plus Mercedes 300Sc Sunbeam Tigers Lancia Aurelias at 50 E-type returns to Geneva
MINI AT 60 LONDON TOUR AND MADDEST RACERS
MIURA MOVIE STAR
GREAT NEW LOOK AND A FREE DOUBLE-SIDED POSTER!
SUPERB FREE POSTER MIURA & E-TYPE
MOST BEAUTIFUL CLASSICS EVER
MASERATI vs DE TOMASO

CLASSIC & SPORTS CAR ARCHIVE

Unlock the legacy of *Classic & Sports Car*

From the dawn of motoring to 200mph hypercars, legendary designers to heroes from the golden age of Grand Prix racing, our archive includes the magazine's entire back catalogue, including special editions, putting more than a century of automotive history at your fingertips.

Subscribe today themagazineshop.com/CA25PA/ACA

Here for the
automotive
industry
ben
Support for life

Life going off track?

We've got your back.

We are **automotive.**

We are **your charity.**

We are **here for you.**

Supporting you through life's twists and turns.
Contact our free & confidential helpline.

☎ 08081 311 333
✉ supportservices@ben.org.uk
💬 ben.org.uk
💬 text BEN to 85258